

Auto workers fight GM's court attack

BY JEAN LUC DUVAL AND FRANK GORTON

FLINT, Michigan — "One day longer! One day longer!" This was one of the most prominent chants at a July 21 rally of at least 1,000 held in solidarity with United Auto Workers (UAW) members on strike against two General Motors (GM) plants here. It reflected the determination of strikers and their supporters to outlast General Motors.

Stepping up their offensive against the unionists, the auto bosses filed a lawsuit against the UAW July 14. GM has appealed to the federal district court in Detroit, not only to end the strikes by declaring them illegal, but to order punitive damage awards against the UAW. The federal judge took control of the arbitration to decide whether the strikes can be supported within the UAW-GM national agreement.

This is the first time since February 1937 that General Motors has sued the union in an effort to end a strike. The last time, it was also against a Flint strike. During that fight judge Paul Gadola Sr. ordered the strikers to vacate the factories they had occupied in the fight for union recognition. The workers ignored his ruling and left the plant after GM agreed to negotiate with the union. In this strike, federal judge Paul Gadola Jr., his son, has been assigned to this case.

July 21 was the 46th day of the strike by 3,400 members of United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 659 at the Metal Fabrications plant. They were joined on the picket lines six days after their strike began by the 5,800

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Rightists suffer blow over parades in N. Ireland

BY CELIA PUGH AND ANNE HOWIE

PORTRADOWN, Northern Ireland — The nationalist population of the Garvagh Road area of Portadown witnessed the humiliating defeat of the rightists forces mobilized by the sectarian Orange Order in the week beginning July 12.

Leaders of the Orange Order had attempted a permanent siege of the area to force an intimidatory march down the Garvagh Road, in defiance of a ban by the British government's Parade's Commission. By July 10 some 25,000 rightists were encamped on a hill at Drumcree Church overlooking the nationalist community, burning bonfires and hurling blast bombs at the security forces. Local Orange Order leaders predicted a mobilization of 100,000 people in Portadown by July 13, the day of Orange marches throughout the north of Ireland, but only a fraction of that number attended.

The nationalist population did not want a repeat of 1996 and 1997 — when the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) police force and British Army beat a path down the Garvagh Road for the rightists with baton charges and thousands of plastic bullets. This year, residents were organizing to mobilize if the

Continued on Page 12

19,000 United Airlines workers join union

BY LARRY LANE

SAN FRANCISCO — A majority of nearly 18,000 passenger service workers at United Airlines voted to join the International Association of Machinists (IAM), the National Mediation Board announced July 17. Another 1,000 recently hired workers will also join the union.

The vote followed a year-long campaign by the IAM. Those joining the union include gate agents and reservations workers.

Big-business newspapers noted with concern that it was the biggest unionization victory in U.S. airline history. Interviews with airline workers here and in other cities indicate that the union vote was a revolt against third-class wages and benefits paid to newly hired workers who joined the workforce after the 1994 Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP) went into effect.

The ESOP agreement was a series of wage and work rule concessions made by the pilots union and the IAM in exchange for the employees owning slightly more than half of the airline stock. United Airlines bosses brag that

Saturn workers vote to authorize strike



Workers at General Motors' Saturn plant in Spring Hill, Tennessee, voted July 19 authorizing their United Auto Workers local to strike, with 95 percent in favor. See article on page 10.

the airline is the country's largest "employee-owned corporation."

The 1994 agreement created a third tier of wage levels — known as C-scale — af-

fecting 40 percent of the workers at United.

Under the plan, new hires in passenger service start at \$6.50 an hour and top out at

Continued on Page 4

Puerto Rico phone strikers fight for return to work with no reprisals

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL

The two unions representing 6,400 telephone workers in Puerto Rico are now engaged in negotiations with government and company officials on ending their month-long strike. The unionists say they will remain on the picket lines until they receive guarantees of no reprisals against them for strike-related activity.

Meanwhile, Puerto Rico's colonial gov-

ernor, Pedro Rosselló, announced July 21 that his administration will go ahead with plans to sell the telephone company to a consortium led by GTE, but at a higher price than it had originally settled for.

The announced sale of the Puerto Rico Telephone Co. sparked the strike June 18. Many Puerto Rican working people, who view the state-owned company as their national patrimony, were especially outraged

at what they considered the ridiculously low price GTE had offered. The Rosselló government had accepted GTE's bid of about \$1.9 billion, of which the U.S. corporation was only going to fork out a small amount in cash and the rest would be covered with a loan from Citibank.

The telephone workers got a big boost

The next 'Militant' will feature firsthand coverage of the July 25 pro-independence actions in Guánica, Puerto Rico.



"The general strike was really a people's strike," said Miguel Sánchez, a member of the electrical construction workers union. Above, strikers rally July 7.

from a 48-hour general strike called by a coalition of about 50 unions to oppose the sale of the phone company as well as the government's plans to privatize other state-owned enterprises. Half a million workers took part in the July 7-8 nationwide strike.

As the telephone strike gained momentum and public outrage grew, the government reversed its stance and reopened discussions following the submission of a \$2 billion bid by the Spanish telephone corporation TISA.

In his latest statement, Rosselló indicated that GTE had raised its offer to match TISA's and promised no mass layoffs. The Puerto Rican government, however, cannot finalize the sale until it gets approval from a U.S. agency, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), a fact that underlines the island's colonial status.

In a telephone interview, Annie Cruz, Continued on Page 14

Palestinians resist troop raids

Israeli soldiers seized 140 goats belonging to Palestinians in Rashaydeh, West Bank, July 15. About 150 residents tried to stop the assault on their town with stones and barricades of burning tires. The Israeli troops fired rubber-coated bullets and tear gas, injuring more than 30 residents. The Israeli government claims the animals were taken "for their own protection, so they won't get shot" while grazing in a field Tel Aviv has declared an army firing zone. The shepherds will have to pay a "holding fine" to get them back.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian Authority rejected pressure by Washington to renegotiate a withdrawal of Israeli troops from less than 13 percent of the West Bank.

Taxi drivers strike in Uganda

Many businesses in Uganda ground to a halt July 13 as taxi drivers went on a national strike to protest the Traffic and Road Safety Act. The new law requires cab drivers to pay up to \$300,000 or spend three years in jail if they are found guilty of causing an injury or death. Strikers set up road blocks, keeping other forms of transportation from functioning.

The next day the government ordered cab drivers back to work, but they refused. Transport minister John Nasasira said, "[The] government will ensure the rule of law and all those taxi operators who want to carry out their normal business will be protected." He said the drivers' strike was illegal. Strikers warned that government interferences in the labor dispute would be treated as strike breaking. Some of the taxi drivers officials have called on strikers go back to work while they negotiate a deal.

Kenyan teachers threaten strike

The 260,000-strong Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT) has threatened to strike nationwide July 15 if the government there does not implement the rest of a pay raise won through an 11-day strike last year. The Kenyan government claims it is unable to meet the agreement to increase teachers' pay between 150 and 200 percent over a five-year period. The teachers' pay is currently as low as \$45 per month. Infla-



Some 200 Orthodox Christian Palestinians protest the selling of land to Zionist settlers by the Greek Orthodox Church in Jerusalem July 4. Tel Aviv is expanding settlements, pushing Arabs off the land.

tion ran about 11 percent last year, and is rising. Education minister Kalonzo Musyoka urged KNUT members to "be cool minded and engage in reason to settle" the agreement. In addition to trying to renege on the pay raise, Finance Minister Simeon Nyachae announced that the government plans to lay off 66,000 teachers over the next three years, in the name of balancing the budget.

Death of opposition leader sparks protests in Nigeria

Rebellions broke out in Nigeria July 7 following the death of Moshood Abiola. Some 60 protesters were killed during the outbreak, as cops clamped down on the unorganized actions and implemented a dusk-to-dawn curfew. Abiola was a popular bourgeois politician who was jailed in 1994 by the late dictator Sani Abacha after running a presidential campaign in 1993 that seemed

on the verge of winning. The army cancelled that election. After Abacha's death, military general Abdulsalam Abubakar stepped into power. He released dozens of political prisoners, claiming he would bring democratic elections to Africa's most populous country. Abiola, who was negotiating to be released when he died suddenly, had agreed to relinquish his claim to the presidency. The official cause of death was cardiac arrest. Elections have been pushed back to next year at the earliest.

While economists boast that the inflation rate in oil-rich Nigeria dropped 29 percent last year, unemployment is as high as 50 percent. Toilers' annual per capita income has also fallen to about \$250; and basic necessities like electricity and phone service are sparse at best.

Madrid shuts Basque media

The Spanish government deployed 350 cops who occupied the headquarters of the Basque radio station EGIN IRRATIA and EGIN newspaper, located in Gipuzkoa province. EGIN's offices in three other cities were also shut and equipment was confiscated. Workers were not permitted to enter. Police also arrested 11 of the administrative councilors of the news outlets on charges of "helping the ETA" [Basque Homeland and Freedom], an armed organization fighting for Basque independence. The news media published and televised excerpts of communiques by and interviews with ETA leaders, which had also been published in the Spanish press.

Supporters of the struggle for Basque self-determination and against the repressive acts

of the Spanish government can send protest letters to: Embassy of Spain, 2735 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20037, or call (202) 452-0100. Fax: (202) 833-5670.

Unemployment increases in Chile

A report issued by Chilean labor minister Jorge Arrate predicted the jobless rate would rise to 7 percent by the year's end. Economy minister Alvaro García put the figure at closer to 6.1 percent. According to government officials the growth in unemployment is concentrated in export-oriented industries like fishing and forestry. Government statistics place unemployment among youth — ages 15-19 — at 18.8 percent.

Judge orders: electrify defendant

Ronnie Hawkins, who chose to represent himself June 30 in a Los Angeles petty-theft trial, is suing after

being shocked for eight seconds with 50,000 volts of electricity for speaking out of turn, on orders from presiding judge Joan Compart-Cassani. Hawkins is one of 22,000 pretrial defendants made to wear stun belts into the courtroom, supposedly to restrain "violent defendants" or "escape risks." Attorney Stephen Yagman is seeking a class-action suit for those who had to wear the belts.

Under California's "three strikes" law, Hawkins faces 25 years to life in prison for allegedly stealing \$200 worth of aspirin.

Klanner admits to killing Blacks

Ku Klux Klan (KKK) member Joshua England on July 13 pled guilty of drive-by shooting three teenagers outside a nightclub in South Carolina in October 1996 because they were Black. He says he was aided by Clayton Spikes Jr., who he drove around town with that evening, shortly after attending a Confederate flag rally. England, who faces up to 25 years in prison, explained his animosity towards Blacks was "pumped and pumped and pumped" into him during his two years as a member of the Klan. Grand dragon of the South Carolina Knights of the KKK made statements to try to publicly distance himself from the racist assault.

In other news, Klanners Gary Cox and Timothy Welch — imprisoned for setting fire to Black churches in 1995 — just received five- and six-year sentence reductions for allegedly collaborating with cops by giving information on burglary and gun trafficking.

—BRIAN TAYLOR

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The Militant

Vol. 62/No. 29
Closing news date: July 23, 1998

Editor: NAOMI CRAINE
Business Manager: MAURICE WILLIAMS
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Published weekly except for one week in December and biweekly from mid-June to mid-August by the *Militant* (ISSN 0026-3885), 410 West St., New York, NY 10014. Telephone: (212) 243-6392; Fax: (212) 924-6040.

The *Militant* can be reached via CompuServe at: 73311,2720 or via Peacenet at: themilitant • Internet: 73311.2720@compuserve.com or: themilitant@igc.apc.org

The *Militant* can be accessed on the internet at: gopher://gopher.igc.apc.org:11/pubs/militant
Correspondence concerning subscriptions or changes of address should be addressed to The *Militant* Business Office, 410 West St., New York, NY 10014.

Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the *Militant*, 410 West St., New York, NY 10014.

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scription send \$65, drawn on a U.S. bank, to above address. By first-class (airmail), send \$80. **Asia:** send \$80 drawn on a U.S. bank to 410 West St., New York, NY 10014.

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Workers in south Korea strike for jobs and wages

BY BRIAN TAYLOR

Tens of thousands of workers in south Korea began a three-day strike July 14 to protest job losses and wage cuts. The south Korean government, hit by the financial crisis sweeping countries throughout Asia, is pushing to implement a series of "restructuring" measures — selling off state-owned companies to foreign capitalist investors, closing weak banks, and throwing thousands of workers onto the streets — to meet the requirements demanded by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a \$58 billion "bail-out" loan.

In turn, capitalists from the United States and other imperialist countries are taking the opportunity to buy up more south Korean factories and banks.

'Reforms' provoke resistance

The strike was initiated by more than 55,000 heavy industry workers belonging to the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU). Some 50,000 bank workers, telephone workers, and others organized by the Federation of Korean Trade Unions (FKTU), an umbrella union for light industry workers, joined the action. "We cannot accept layoffs. They threaten our livelihood," said one FKTU spokesperson.

"We oppose layoffs! We demand job security!" was a main chant at a rally of 10,000 strikers and students July 15 in front of Myeongdong church where labor leaders have taken refuge from the government. Seoul issued warrants for cops to arrest 85 union officials for "illegal" strike activity.

Union officials for workers at Hyundai Motor, who initially went on strike indefinitely, went back to work early. "Now that we have taken a flexible stand, we expect

management will be flexible, too," said official Kim Yun-ho. But the bosses at south Korea's largest automaker went ahead with the company's first massive layoffs anyway, handing 2,500 workers dismissal notices July 16.

During the first half of this year, so-called restructuring has doubled unemployment to 1.5 million — 6.7 percent — and is projected to reach 2 million by the end of this year. On the average, 2,000 people a day are losing their jobs. Trying to justify the government's austerity moves, south Korean president Kim Dae-Jung said, "Workers are not the only ones who suffer....We all must share the pain."

Kim has spearheaded the "reforms." A bourgeois politician once held up in the big-business press as a champion of working people, Kim's decision to drive through on IMF demands is forcing tens of thousands of workers into battles.

Some 14,000 Kia Motors workers struck on June 1 against 50 percent wage cuts and unfair labor practices. Workers there have not been paid \$6,500 in bonuses accrued over the past half year. This was one of many labor actions that followed a two-day general strike May 27-28 organized by the KCTU in response to massive layoffs. Over 120,000 workers at more than 130 worksites participated in that strike.

The KCTU issued five demands including to scrap legislation passed recently to allow the layoffs and a hefty increase in unemployment compensation.

The Kim government, calling unionists' demands "unacceptable," mobilized cops to take "strong" and "stern" action against strikers if they prevented scabs from entering factories, blocked plants in any way, or



Thousands of workers in south Korea rally against unemployment in Seoul July 13. A two-day strike started the next day called by the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions.

damaged property. Seoul's Supreme Prosecution Office subpoenaed 143 union leaders of the May strike and threatened to arrest them on charges of organizing a work stoppage of more than 100,000 people.

Seoul debt crisis deepens

South Korean companies have a debt to south Korean financial institutions of nearly \$432 billion. National banks have issued loans to collapsing domestic industries that amount to many times the company's value. Companies that can't repay the loans often go under. The default on those loans renders south Korean banks unable to pay the debt owed to capitalists. Then the government assumes the bad debt, trying to stave off instability and losing foreign capital, footing the bill with no prospect of being repaid, thereby increasing the country's overall debt.

This vicious circle is in part what triggered the currency crisis that led to the IMF "bail out" last December. In the first week of January 100 Korean companies went bankrupt and 10 merchant banks shut down. Thousands of bankruptcies are still loom-

ing.

Moody's Investor Service downgraded the ratings of 19 commercial banks in south Korea May 11. U.S. bank moguls are pressuring Seoul to break up business conglomerates called *chaebols*, and put them up for sale. The south Korean rulers are eliminating government protections on domestic industries while selling off pieces of the country's major industries, from steel to automobile manufacturing. The Korea First and Seoul banks have already been taken over by the government and are scheduled to be auctioned off this November. Through the sell-off of the national patrimony Seoul has a goal of raising \$6 billion from the auction block by December 1999.

U.S. and European capitalists are looking to buy up factories and banks in the region at bargain rates, in hopes that the crisis will bottom out and the "Asian miracle" of rapid growth and profits will restart. General Motors chairman John Smith Jr. told the *Wall Street Journal*, "Up until recently, we have had to build our way into Asia," but now it can be done through partnerships and acquisitions. GM officials are in talks with Daewoo Motors about an alliance. Ford Motors and the Japanese company Mazda Motor are expressing interest in jointly buying 50 percent of Kia Motors. The U.S. power company AES Corp. announced a \$874 million buy up of south Korea's Hanwha Group, and German bankers at Commezbank said they will grab a \$250 million stake in the state-run Korea Exchange Bank.

The more the imperialists anchor themselves in the economies of the underdeveloped nations, the stronger they are affected by the crisis and the social explosions in these countries. Japan's prime minister Ryutaro Hashimoto announced July 13 that he would resign, after the ruling Liberal Democratic Party took a beating in parliamentary elections. The Japanese economy is in its worst recession since World War II, with a possible banking collapse looming as a result of uncollectable loans. "The reality is beginning to dawn" on capitalist investors, commented Gary Greenberg, managing director of Van Eck Global Asset Management Asia, in early June. "Earlier optimism," Greenberg says, is being replaced with more "economic bad news."

Youth delegation: for a united Korea

BY ARGIRIS MALAPANIS AND SAMANTHA KERN

PYONGYANG, Korea — "Korea Is One!" read the banner, in English and Korean, that 10 representatives of youth organizations from around the world held as they marched to the terminal of the international airport here from the plane that brought them from Beijing July 18. They were joined by several other delegates who were already in the capital of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).

The 14-member fact-finding delegation, sponsored by the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY) and hosted by the Kim Il Sung Socialist Youth League of Korea, released a statement to the press at the airport. "We came here to express our full support to and solidarity with the young people of Korea in their struggle against imperialism and for the peaceful reunification of their homeland without interference from any foreign powers," it said. Through seeing first-hand the concrete wall that divides the Korean peninsula in half and meeting Korean youth and others, the delegation will find the truth about Korea and spread it to young people around the world. "Through this trip we will strengthen our solidarity campaign with the Korean people demanding the tearing down of the concrete wall — a symbol of Korea's division and physical obstacle to its reunification — and the withdrawal of the 40,000 U.S. troops and their nuclear weapons stationed in south Korea."

Iraklis Tsaldaridis of the Communist Youth of Greece read the statement to the press. The next day *Rodong Sinmun*, the daily newspaper of the Workers Party of Korea, carried an article on the delegation's arrival along with a photo of the group holding the banner at the airport.

"WFDY sponsored the week-long trip in July, which is designated as the international month in solidarity with the Korean people," said Mun Chol, one of the main organizers of the delegation. He is a vice-president of WFDY and one of the two representatives of the Kim Il Sung Socialist Youth League at the federation's headquarters in Budapest.

Activities in the DPRK this month will

culminate with celebrations marking the 45th anniversary of the end of the 1950-53 Korean War on July 27. "That day marks the Korean people's victorious resistance to the brutal war led by the U.S. government, which was aimed at the imperialist subjugation of the entire Korean peninsula," said José Ramón Rodríguez, of the Union of Young Communists of Cuba, in an interview later. "Washington's assault failed to overturn the DPRK because the Korean people refused to bend their knees. Just like the Cuban people have refused to bend our knees to the Yankee imperialists. It was a victory for every progressive human being, for everyone fighting against imperialism."

Despite facing vastly superior firepower, the Korean People's Army, with the help of experienced volunteer troops from China, was able to fight the U.S.-led United Nations forces to a standstill in 1953 at roughly the 38th parallel, thus ending the Korean War. Thousands of U.S. and Korean troops currently patrol both sides of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) along the 38th parallel, because a state of war still formally exists; Washington and Seoul have refused to sign a peace treaty. The border is a tense area. In 1977 the south Korean government built, with U.S. aid, a heavily fortified concrete wall along the entire length of the DMZ, 150 miles, on the southern side of the demarcation line.

Rodríguez, who is a university student here, was designated by the UJC of Cuba to be its representative on the delegation. He pointed out that another important anniversary in 1953 coincides with the end of the Korean War. July 26 marks the 45th anniversary of the assault on Moncada by Cuban revolutionaries, the start of the insurrection that a few years later opened the socialist revolution in the Americas.

The delegation includes Singh Harchand, who is heading the group and is the general secretary of WFDY and a leader of the youth of the Communist Party of India; Raul Narodslavsky, president of Kinderland, the organization of pioneers of the Communist Party of Austria; Christiano Aristimunha of the October 8 Revolutionary Youth of Bra-

zil; Toshio Ishimatsu of the Socialist Youth League of Japan; Aleksey Alexandrovic Megleev of the Russian Communist Youth Federation; and Samantha Kern of the Young Socialists and Argiris Malapanis of the Socialist Workers Party in the United States. Virtually all the youth organizations represented are affiliated with the World Federation of Democratic Youth. The only exception is the Mongolian Democratic Youth Federation, represented by Tsogot Tungalag, secretary of international relations. This youth group is linked with the governing party of Mongolia and belongs to the International Socialist Union of Youth, the federation of youth groups affiliated with social democratic parties.

The program of the delegation includes visits to the Victorious Fatherland Liberation War Museum in Pyongyang, the Demilitarized Zone, rural areas, and a meeting with veterans of the Korean War.

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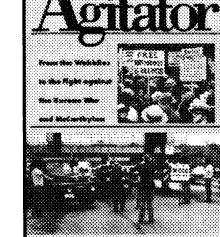
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\$235,000 pledged so far to capital fund needed to transform Pathfinder

BY NAOMI CRAINE

Forty-five people have pledged more than \$235,000 so far toward the \$400,000 capital fund needed for Pathfinder's print shop to acquire computer-to-plate technology. Going CTP, as the process is known in the printing industry, is one of the steps being taken to transform the production of the 350 books and pamphlets Pathfinder is committed to keep in print, to ensure that every one is available to workers, farmers, and young fighters who need them.

This transformation is a combined effort of the worker-bolsheviks who work in the print shop and some 140 volunteers around the world, supporters of the communist movement who have taken on the responsibility to put every single Pathfinder title in digital form, from the text to the covers and photographs.

The first piece of equipment needed in the transition to CTP, a digital image setter that will eliminate a big part of traditional prepress work, arrived in the print shop July 21, with payment due in 30 days. This is a step toward ending labor-intensive production methods that are increasingly antiquated, that use more costly materials and make frequent, short runs of books prohibitively expensive and time consuming.

Many of the pledges to the capital appeal so far were made at an Active Workers Conference held in Pittsburgh July 11-12. The 450 participants included trade unionists, activists in the fight for Puerto Rican independence, Young Socialists, and supporters of the communist movement involved in the project to put books from Pathfinder Press in digital form. The next issue of the *Militant* will feature coverage of this conference.

The contributions, which are of \$1,000 or

more, come from bequests, trusts, and other special windfalls.

Nearly \$8,000 in seed money for the fund was contributed through the Helen Scheer Memorial Fund Appeal, launched April 26 at a meeting celebrating the life and political contributions of Helen Scheer, a 54-year veteran of the communist movement. Some of the funds come from contract bonuses pledged by members of the International Association of Machinists; Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers; United Auto Workers; United Steelworkers of America; and United Transportation Union.

Those who would like to contribute can write to Pathfinder, 410 West St., New York, NY 10014.



Militant photos: Lisa Rottach (top); Dave Wulp (left)

Transforming production of Pathfinder books is a combined effort of worker-bolsheviks in the print shop and 140 volunteers in many cities who are putting the books into digital form. Above, image setter arrives in shop, the first step toward a computer-to-plate system.

These steps were discussed at the July 11-12 Active Workers Conference in Pittsburgh (left and below), where much of the necessary capital was pledged. The aim is to keep in print the books fighting workers need. Bottom left, discussing the *Militant* on the picket line at Peterbilt plant in Nashville, Tennessee.



Militant/José Aravena



Militant/Rich Stuart

of loss of retirement. And there were A-scalers who were in favor of the union. Because of the big turnover a bigger workload is forced on those in A-scale."

The company concedes turnover is higher than 40 percent a year.

Racatan noted that "this organizing drive was different from past ones because the IAM put a lot more resources toward the drive compared to past drives. In the last couple of years you've heard more talk about unions. During this drive people were more aware that this was going on."

This vote makes United Airlines, the world's largest air carrier, almost completely organized. This includes 19,000 in passenger service and nearly 27,000 ramp workers, mechanics, food service workers, and flight dispatchers in the IAM.

Other major unions are the Air Line Pilots Association and the Association of Flight Attendants (AFA).

The union victory coincides with other signs of labor ferment in the airline industry, including the struggle by the Machinists for a contract at Northwest Airlines (see article on page 11). Northwest Airlines says it lost \$60 million in revenue in June alone due to work stoppages and slowdowns by ground workers and pilots who have been working without a contract since the fall of 1996. There is also a campaign under way by the IAM to organize ramp workers at

Continental Airlines. And the Communication Workers of America have signed up 10,000 passenger service workers at USAirways.

Four days after the union election, United announced that the C-scale wages and benefits for an additional 2,000 clerical workers would be abolished after April 13, 2000.

United must now negotiate a contract with the IAM for the new union members.

Larry Lane is a member of the IAM in San Francisco. Betsey Stone in Chicago and Laura Anderson in Los Angeles contributed to this article.

United workers join IAM

Continued from front page

\$8.60 an hour, without ever being able to reach the \$18 an hour earned by workers in the highest tier, or A-scale. They also receive fewer vacation and sick days, no medical or dental coverage, and almost no pension benefits.

Meanwhile, United bosses raked in big profits. The company announced July 22 that its net profits were \$282 million for the second quarter, up by 16.5 percent.

A ramp worker at Los Angeles International Airport who used to work in customer service but transferred to the ramp because it was unionized, with better pay and benefits, put it this way: "The workers who fought for the union did it in response to the company's greediness in not paying people what they are worth. I think the worst thing is the fact that workers couldn't move up in wages, no matter how hard they worked and regardless of how skilled they are. A person making \$7.75 an hour could

be sitting next to someone who is making \$17 an hour doing the same job, knowing all along they will never have the opportunity to really improve their situation."

This victorious campaign to organize passenger service workers was one of many in the last 20 years. Unsuccessful attempts were made by the Teamsters Union and the IAM, the previous one in 1991.

Pete Racatan, a worker at the Los Angeles International Airport with 32 years at United, the last 12 in customer service, reported, "This time around the company couldn't be so antiunion as they have been in the past organizing drives. In the past, when they weren't tied down by the ESOP, they would offer workers big 5 percent raises right before the union vote. Then, after workers did not get a raise the following year, they were very angry. This experience helped to build support for the future union.

"There were A-scale workers who were not in favor of the union because of the fear

from *'Pathfinder'*

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Workers discuss politics, buy the 'Militant'

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

"Teamster members at Anheuser-Busch in Merrimack, New Hampshire, told us they are under threat of a plant closing if the bosses' contract demands are not met," reports Greg McCartan, a member of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees.

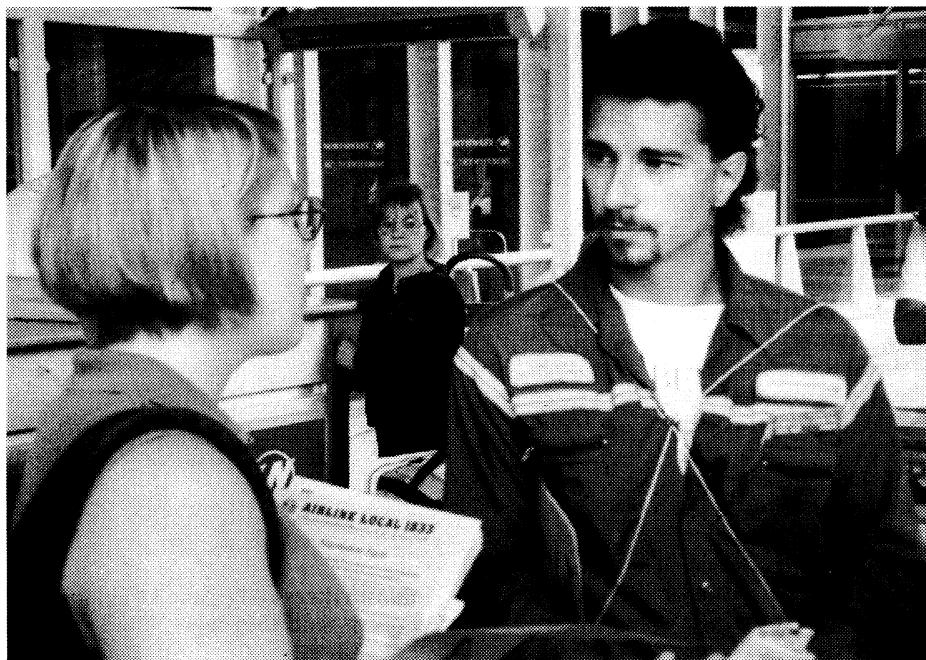
"They're blackmailing us," one union member said as he drove into the plant. "They are saying, 'take the contract or you will lose your jobs.' Socialist workers from Boston spoke briefly with about 25 workers driving in and out of the plant during the shift change July 17 and 21.

"Workers here report that the company is using the pretext of high per-barrel costs at the Merrimack plant, and has said it will shut down the plant unless steep concessions are approved by the Teamsters union. Pressure from the company has resulted in many workers voting in favor of the contract," added McCartan.

"The vote was split about 50-50 here," said another union member. "Most of us don't like it, but there are the threats to our jobs from the company," he added. "We have to vote this down," a third-shift worker said, adding "Our union is at stake."

Twenty-four copies of the *Militant* were sold by socialist workers at the two shift changes.

"One thing we're finding out is that while the media is reporting that all the General Motors plants are shut down, some of the parts plants are still open, although with a reduced workforce," wrote *Militant* supporter Kevin Dwire from Cleveland.



Militant/Michael Pennock

Heather Wood (left), Socialist Workers candidate for U.S. Congress in Minnesota's 4th C.D., at informational airport picket line by Northwest Airlines workers.

"On July 16 we sent a sales team to the GM plant in Sandusky, Ohio, where they sold 18 copies of the *Militant* at the shift change." Several days later socialist workers sold 10 papers at the Ford Brookpark plant in Cleveland.

"Over the past six weeks, we've sold 88 copies of the *Militant* to auto workers," Dwire continued. "We plan to get a sales team to Warren, Ohio, to talk to workers at GM's Packard Electric plant who are organized by the International Union of Electronic Workers."

Supporters of the *Militant* in Atlanta and Birmingham, Alabama, have also organized regional sales teams to reach out to auto workers and other unionists who are involved in contract fights and organizing drives.

"We teamed up with supporters from Atlanta and traveled to Spring Hill, Tennessee, where more than 5,000 members of the United Auto Workers authorized a strike against Saturn, a division of GM," said Meg Novak, a steelworker from Birmingham. Novak said many workers stopped by the literature table the team had set up to discuss the *Militant*'s front-page coverage of the GM strike in Flint, Michigan, and the recent two-day general strike in Puerto Rico.

Forty-eight copies of the *Militant*, two copies of *A Political Biography of Walter Reuther*, and the Pathfinder pamphlet *Che Guevara and the Fight for Socialism Today* were sold there.

"After the Saturn workers meeting was over we drove to Nashville, Tennessee, to meet with a longtime *Militant* subscriber who renewed his sub and bought the Pathfinder book *Socialism on Trial*," she added. "He joined with us to visit the picket line of UAW members on strike against the Peterbilt truck plant."

Other *Militant* supporters from Birmingham and Houston traveled to New Orleans for a July 19 mass rally of 7,000 people who gathered to support a union organizing drive

RENEWAL DRIVE JULY 8 – AUGUST 4
Help win long-term readers to the socialist press

	Militant Goal	Militant Sold	PM % Goal	PM Sold
Canada				
Vancouver	12	4	33%	1
Toronto	9	2	22%	1
Montreal	4	1	25%	3
Canada Total	25	7	28%	5
United States				
Atlanta	7	3	43%	3
Washington, DC	9	2	22%	3
Cleveland	8	1	13%	2
Des Moines	8	1	13%	4
Houston	8	1	13%	2
Philadelphia	8	1	13%	1
San Francisco	17	2	12%	7
Los Angeles	20	2	10%	8
Seattle	13	1	8%	3
Twin Cities, MN	13	1	8%	2
Boston	14	1	7%	3
Birmingham, AL	10	0	0%	2
Chicago	14	0	0%	6
Detroit	10	0	0%	2
Miami	10	0	0%	5
New York	30	0	0%	15
Newark, NJ	20	0	0%	8
Pittsburgh	10	0	0%	1
U.S. Total	229	16	7%	77
Australia	3	0	0%	1
Iceland	3	0	0%	
New Zealand				
Christchurch	6	0	0%	
Auckland	6	0	0%	
N.Z. Total	12	0	0%	
Sweden	4	0	0%	1
United Kingdom				
London	10	0	0%	2
Manchester	3	0	0%	
UK Total	13	0	0%	2
International totals	289	23	8%	86
Goal/Should be at	275	138	50%	85
				43

Step up pace in renewal campaign

The four-week drive to increase the long-term readership of the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* is substantially behind schedule. Many readers of the paper, like the Nashville subscriber, will not only renew their subscription but would be interested in joining socialist workers at picket lines, rallies, staff literature tables at college campuses, and other political activities. Using this example, *Militant* supporters can boost their efforts to successfully wrap up the final two weeks of the renewal campaign.

Monthly sales of Pathfinder books

Countries/Cities	June			Previous months		
	Goal	Sales	% Sold	May	April	March
AUSTRALIA	36	45	125%			
FRANCE	30	35	117%	270%	37%	117%
NEW ZEALAND						
Auckland	39	28	72%	126%	83%	121%
Christchurch	28	18	64%	47%	66%	81%
N.Z. Total	67	46	69%	88%	76%	103%
UNITED KINGDOM						
London	150	124	83%	104%	85%	95%
Manchester	56	17	30%	80%	54%	50%
U.K. Total	206	141	68%	98%	77%	83%
SWEDEN	60	36	60%	97%	57%	142%
CANADA						
Vancouver	50	31	62%	40%	86%	128%
Toronto	80	49	61%	68%	74%	100%
Montreal	50	26	52%	94%	115%	79%
CANADA Total	180	106	59%	67%	91%	100%
UNITED STATES						
Chicago	77	92	119%	158%	70%	118%
Washington, D.C.	70	83	119%	86%	160%	191%
Atlanta	48	44	92%	71%	127%	100%
Miami	60	51	85%	89%	135%	103%
Birmingham	45	34	76%	51%	64%	64%
Boston	85	62	73%	106%	132%	208%
Los Angeles	120	79	66%	123%	246%	214%
San Francisco	200	99	50%	49%	62%	83%
Cleveland	50	24	48%	50%	38%	62%
Houston	65	28	43%	25%	34%	80%
Philadelphia	55	23	42%	65%	82%	105%
New York	245	102	42%	78%	104%	122%
Newark	171	64	37%	11%	41%	81%
Pittsburgh	63	20	32%	38%	71%	73%
Des Moines	45	17	38%	37%	54%	100%
Detroit	45	14	31%	144%	116%	104%
Seattle	80	23	29%	76%	75%	45%
Twin Cities	104	26	25%	32%	61%	39%
U.S. Total	1628	885	49%	62%	84%	96%
Goal/Should be	1800	1800	100%			
ICELAND	8	0	0%			
GREECE	13	0	0%			

Unions	June			Previous months		
	Goal	Sales	% Sold	May	April	March
AMWU	2	1	50%			
UNITED STATES						
UNITE	18	9	50%	30%	45%	70%
UTU	78	38	49%	26%	19%	21%
USWA	50	12	24%	40%	38%	50%
IAM	60	13	22%	35%	62%	42%
UAW	50	6	12%	22%	56%	14%
OCAW	22	1	5%	14%	32%	32%
UFCW	10	0	0%	50%	130%	90%
U.S. total	268	79	27%	29%	45%	35%
BRITAIN						
RMT	6	2	33%	33%	117%	150%
AEEU	5	1	20%	60%	40%	60%
TGWU	7	0	0%	14%	0%	29%
UK total	18	3	17%	33%	50%	78%
NEW ZEALAND						
SFWU	1	1	100%	0%	0%	0%
EU	2	0	0%	100%	50%	50%
MWU	3	0	0%	0%	0%	0%
N.Z. total	6	1	17%	33%	17%	

Philadelphia: Transit workers settle strike

BY JASON COUGHLIN

PHILADELPHIA — On July 10 a tentative agreement was reached between negotiators for Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 234 and the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA). The 5,600 members of the TWU, who had been on strike since June 1, returned to work July 11. Union members are receiving copies of the agreement and will be taking a ratification vote on July 24.

Concessions sought by SEPTA during the strike included the introduction of part-time workers, contracting out maintenance work, takebacks in workers compensation, a sweeping "management rights" clause, and changes in disciplinary procedures that would make it easier to fire workers.

Both the bosses and the TWU leadership claim victory in the strike.

Media accounts of the agreement indicate that concessions were accepted by the union, but SEPTA did not get everything they sought. SEPTA failed to win the right to fire workers injured on the job who are off work for more than six months. Instead, workers will get one year minimum sick leave with 10 additional weeks for each year of service. The tentative agreement, however, puts a cap on the maximum amount of workers compensation that can be received.

The outcome of negotiations on the "management rights" clause is unclear, but the press reports that it is a watered down version of the original proposal by SEPTA. The bosses' demand to begin hiring part-time workers has been left to binding arbitration.

Without knowing many details about the tentative contract, Transport union members who spoke with *Militant* reporters were upbeat and felt the strike demonstrated that the deep concessions being demanded by SEPTA and the City Administration could be held back.

"We knew it would be hard after it went on for three and then four weeks. But we couldn't go back and give SEPTA what they wanted," explained bus driver James Brown. "Because of the economy, many realized that if they went back, things would just get worse, people would be fired. I hope people are watching this strike, so that they can learn that you can stand up."

Several strikers told *Militant* reporters that they were prepared to stay out until the fall, and were surprised the strike ended when it did.

While the big-business press has glorified the role of Democratic congressman Robert Brady in mediating the end of the strike, TWU members point to the cohesion and confidence of their union as the key fact in



Transit Workers Union strikers rally June 10 against SEPTA. TWU members returned to work July 11. Unionists said they were "glad we stood up to SEPTA."

SEPTA's decision to retreat from its initial offer.

Throughout the strike the media, in concert with Philadelphia's Mayor Rendell and other politicians, waged a concerted campaign to convince the public to take the side of SEPTA bosses. For example, the *Philadelphia Daily News* ran a special "Strike Back" column every day, offering free cab fare to those who wrote the best complaints about the strike.

But many workers who depend on public transportation didn't go for this line. Bus drivers said they were pleasantly surprised by the reception they got from SEPTA riders upon returning to work. "I didn't find a single nasty response, and one rider told me she was glad we stood up to SEPTA," commented John, a driver at Callowhill.

Jason Coughlin is a member of the United Auto Workers.

Miners speak out on company disregard for health

BY SALM KOLIS

PIKEVILLE, Kentucky — At hearings here July 13 and in Benham, Kentucky, July 14, dozens of miners testified about the falsification by the coal mine operators of coal dust samples. Workers also described how the new stringent state criteria make it almost impossible for a miner to win compensation for black lung disease.

In December 1996 the Kentucky State Legislature passed House Bill One giving special weight to the opinions of doctors at the University of Kentucky and University of Louisville medical schools in the interpretation of the chest X-rays that are used to determine if a miner has the disease and what the level of their disability is. The legislation also placed a time limit on requests for additional benefits as the progressive illness worsens. Black lung, or pneumoconiosis, is caused when coal dust settles in the lungs and robs a person of their breath.

The crisis confronting miners was exposed in a series of articles titled "Dust, Deception and Death" that appeared in the Louisville *Courier-Journal* in April. The articles revealed that in the three years prior to the new law, about 80 percent of Kentucky miners who filed for black lung benefits received them. Only five of the 538 miners evaluated in 1997 were determined eligible. Almost 1,500 people die a year from black lung in the United States.

At a rally called by the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) April 30 at the Kentucky capitol, 100 miners and supporters carried signs saying, "Black Lung Kills" and displayed pages of the articles on placards. Under the pressure of the widespread discussion, the State Legislature's Interim Joint Committee on Labor and Industry held a series of four hearings around the state with the last two in the coal fields.

The Benham and Pikeville hearings were held in the evening and their proceedings were videotaped. More than 100 people participated in each of the two meetings. Concerned about being fired, few working miners testified. Most of the testimony came from miners who have worked or are working at nonunion mines.

'They can't take my freedom of speech'

At the Benham hearing in Harlan County, which has been the scene of battles between miners and coal bosses in the past, a miner testified with his face still covered with coal dust from the day's work. He took an envelope from his pocket containing records he had kept on the readings from the dust sampler on his mining machine in 1997-98 and held it up for the committee to see. "I kept the numbers that were on the dust cassettes, and these numbers never showed up on the bulletin board."

Exemplifying the determination to get out

the truth that marked the participation of the majority of miners at both hearings, he said, "When they hired me to be a miner they did not take away my freedom of speech."

In Benham a miner who worked at Shamrock Coal Co. said almost two-thirds of the workforce of 300 was laid off immediately after House Bill One was passed. The laid-off miners, most of whom had between 15 and 20 years in the mines, received a phone call on a Sunday telling them they were out of a job. Although the company has recalled some who were laid off, the miner explained, "The mine is going full blast. They're hiring young men and killing them."

Testifying in Pikeville on July 13, Burt Melton from the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) explained that for many Kentucky miners "the first medical confirmation of their having black lung comes on their death certificate."

At both hearings workers described the various ways they had seen the companies tamper with the samples they're required to take by the Federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act of 1969. Dust sampling machines are turned off when conditions are dusty or the machines are covered with rags or tape or simply left in areas where there is little or no dust. Some testified that they received direct orders to falsify their samples, others said they felt pressured through threats of closing the mine into cheating on samples.

Workers also described the bosses' disregard for controlling dust to the level required by law. Water sprays on the continuous mining machines, used to help the dust settle, are left clogged and out of order. The maintenance of proper ventilation — crucial to

clearing dust and noxious and explosive gasses away from work areas — is ignored.

At both hearings miners testified about the need for surprise inspections. The workers detailed some of the ways conditions are adjusted when a state or federal inspector is due for a visit. Production levels are slashed in half or more, ventilation is increased, or adjusted to ventilate only the portion of the mine being inspected.

"You know, we were going to bomb Saddam Hussein because he wouldn't let inspectors do their job," said miner Ronald Cole in the *Courier-Journal* article. "And I thought, 'Man, you've got...inspectors right here in Pike County not doing their job, and there ain't nobody doing nothing about it.'"

Few of the miners who testified had ever worked in a mine where they had been represented by the UMWA. Virtually all had black lung disease. They told of having one X-ray after another of their lungs. Their attending doctors diagnosed their ailment as black lung, but the state-appointed doctors determined that they do not have the disease.

Support from miners in other states

Some people traveled considerable distances to attend these hearings. This part of Kentucky borders on West Virginia, Virginia, and Tennessee. A group came to the Benham hearing from the other side of the mountain, from the Black Lung Committee in Wise County, Virginia. Wise County was the heart of the fight in 1989-90 to defend the miners' union against the assault by the Pittston Coal Group.

In Pikeville a representative of the Ken-

tucky Black Lung Association, Susie Davis, described the human toll of the 1996 law. Referring to another struggle by miners she said, "Maybe miners in Kentucky will have to do what West Virginia miners did in 1969." Strikes and demonstrations and an occupation of the state capitol by miners and their supporters won the first black lung law in West Virginia in 1969. Breathing from an oxygen tank, the president of the National Black Lung Association, Mike South, testified in Benham. "The color that the coal operators see in the problem of black lung...is the color of the profit margin they keep enhancing: green," South said.

In his testimony at Benham, UMWA health and safety director Joe Main noted that of 50 coal companies charged with sample fraud, only three were fined.

Early in the Pikeville meeting, one miner testified that he had never seen any tampering with dust sampling and that samples were taken frequently. As he was taking his seat, one miner stated in a loud voice, "His check will be in the mail tomorrow."

A delegation from the Alliance of Kentucky Coal, an employers' association, also made a presentation in Pikeville.

The May-June issue of the UMWA Journal announced that reprints of "Dust, Death and Deception," the Louisville *Courier-Journal* exposé, are available from the UMWA Communications Dept. by calling Thelma Blount at (202) 842-7321.

Salm Kolis is a member of the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) in Pittsburgh. USWA member Jeanne FitzMaurice and Ned Measel contributed to this article.

Women miners and supporters hold 20th conference

BY CECELIA MORIARTY

PITTSBURGH — In June 1979, the Coal Employment Project (CEP) organized the first national conference of women coal miners. It followed a successful class-action lawsuit that forced 153 of the largest coal companies in the United States to end their blatant pattern of discrimination against hiring women for mining jobs.

About 65 people attended the CEP's 20th national conference in Pittsburgh June 26-28. Attending were working miners, former miners, supporters, co-workers, activists of the CEP, and representatives from the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA).

The largest delegations were from Pennsylvania and Alabama. Several came from Canada. The delegations included miners from both underground and strip mines.

The UMWA endorsed this conference, as it has each year since 1983. Carlo Tarley, the union's secretary-treasurer, was a keynote speaker at the welcoming dinner.

The conference presented nine workshops in a day and a half, including on diesel in the workplace, global warming, employment discrimination, UMWA organizing, alternative careers, and the formation of a labor party. *Struggles in Steel*, a documentary about the fight for equal rights by Black steelworkers, was also shown. A panel of former miners reviewed some of the history of the Coal Employment Project and the miners support groups that were a part of the earlier years of the organization. One recalled solidarity activities for labor struggles over the years as some of her important memories of having been a miner.

The CEP board pointed out that the mines were not hiring women — or men — right now, and requested ideas for new goals for CEP. A few of the miners at the conference, however, expressed a desire to see the organization keep fighting to get women hired. There are still mines with no women working in them, a miner from West Virginia said.

In areas where some very limited hiring has taken place, or might take place, some miners are trying to help other women get hired. Many of the women at the conference who are still working miners hold positions of enough seniority that they are in key production positions, underground on the longwalls, or operating huge trucks at surface mines. They report day-to-day struggles with intensified work schedules and newer and more massive equipment to operate.

Miners used the informal activities of the conference to have longer discussions with each other about problems they face on the job. Some were also very interested in discussing the strike by auto workers at General Motors and what workers are doing in other parts of the world.

Participants elected to hold next year's proceedings in Des Moines, Iowa.

Cecelia Moriarty is a member of the United Steelworkers of America.

NAACP convention delegates debate affirmative action

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

ATLANTA — Faced with the broadening assault on affirmative action programs throughout the United States, leaders of the NAACP made this social gain a major theme at their 89th national convention. Nearly 5,000 delegates assembled here July 11–16 to discuss this and other political issues, including the struggle of Black farmers to stay on the land, getting a piece of the pie in the entertainment industry, and the Clinton administration's Africa trade policy.

Pressured to respond to Initiative 200, a ballot measure in Washington state similar to the anti-affirmative action Proposition 209 that passed in California, Julian Bond, chairman of the NAACP National Board of Directors, declared at the July 12 public meeting, "We are donating \$50,000 to the fight against rolling back the clock" on affirmative action. Proposition 209 was a 1996 ballot initiative that ended affirmative action in public education and other government programs.

Other capitalist political figures at the meeting who voiced their approval for affirmative action included former chairman of the U.S. joint chiefs of staff Gen. Colin Powell. Preparing for the presidential race in 2000, U.S. vice president Albert Gore cited a list of appointments of Blacks in the Clinton administration. Atlanta mayor William Campbell was the only prominent figure at the convention who said he supported quotas in affirmative action programs.

International Association of Machinists president R. Thomas Buffenbarger stated his support for affirmative action at a labor luncheon attended by more than 1,000 people.

The convention included a youth workshop on affirmative action and another one organized by union officials. One of the panellists at the youth workshop, LaRoddric Theodule, had been rejected from attending the University of California Berkeley to study architecture as a result of Proposition 209.

"Black admissions are down 80 percent at Stanford Law School," said Hilary Shelton of the NAACP Washington Bureau.

Other workshops held at the six-day conference included education, economic empowerment, legal redress, life membership, marketing strategies for women, community

development, and youth voter education.

On July 15 some 200 people including nearly 100 farmers rallied at the federal building before marching to the convention site. A busload of some 60 farmers came in from Virginia and North Carolina.

The morning session focused on the struggle of Black farmers. Speakers included Gary Grant, president of the Black Farmers and Agriculturists Association, Ralph Paige, executive director of the Federation of Southern Cooperatives, and John Boyd, president of the National Black Farmers Association. U.S. secretary of agriculture Dan Glickman also addressed the delegates.

Alvin Freeman, an oil refinery worker locked out by Crown Petroleum in Houston, Texas, who marched with the farmers said, "All of us workers have problems, but it helps when we join the fight."

Darryl Baker, a GM auto worker from Flint, Michigan, said he would have marched if he had known about the farmers' demonstration. "I came here to ask for support for our strike," he said. "I am getting signatures for a petition pledging support. We will use this with a statement to the local media."

The convention passed a resolution urging the United States Department of Agriculture "to put in place affirmative action loan programs" for Black farmers. Other resolutions adopted included support of the Crown workers and in defense of mushroom workers at Quincy Farms in Florida. While about a quarter of the delegates at the labor luncheon were from the UAW, there was no formal discussion on the strikes at General Motors.

Other features of the convention included a "Town Hall" meeting of more than 2,000 people. The lineup of bourgeois politicians there included Jesse Jackson; former Atlanta mayor Andrew Young; former New York mayor David Dinkins; and Susan Rice, assistant secretary for African Affairs, who pressed support for the so-called Africa Growth and Opportunity Act.

Many young people participated in convention who came looking for a way to fight against assaults on affirmative action in education. Two young activists at the voter education workshop were involved in building the Million Youth Movement scheduled for September 4–7 in Atlanta.

200 protest racist discrimination against Black farmers



Militant/Linda Joyce

Some 100 Black farmers were joined by 100 supporters July 15 to protest decades-long racist discrimination by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

ATLANTA — "The judge says I own nothing," said William Miller, a 67-year-old Black farmer from Macon County, Georgia. "They are trying to accelerate foreclosure of my farm." Miller, born on a farm his family has owned since 1888, worked in an auto plant in New Jersey. He moved back to the farm after his father died. Many Black farmers who came to the NAACP convention explained how government officials collaborated with corporations to steal their land, block loans, and how the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) discriminated against them. The number of Black farmers has fallen from more than 900,000 in 1920 to 18,000 today. In 1992 Blacks owned 1 percent of the country's farmland — down from 14 percent in 1920.

The Black Farmers & Agriculturists Association (BFAA) filed a \$2.5 billion federal discrimination lawsuit against the USDA on behalf of 400 farmers in July 1997. Another group of Black farmers filed a second class action lawsuit.

Attempting to thwart the farmers' fight, the U.S. Justice Department ruled in April that a two-year statute of limitation had expired, which the agency used to prohibit many of the discrimination claims backlog at the USDA. The

U.S. Senate passed an amendment July 20 that waived the federal statute of limitations under the Equal Credit Opportunity Act for farmers and applicants to the USDA's rural housing programs who have discrimination complaints.

"We want the American people to know about the violations being perpetrated against Black farmers," Eddie Slaughter, vice president of the BFAA, told reporters at the NAACP convention.

"These farmers are so upset that if [USDA secretary Daniel] Glickman does not resolve the suit, they will set up a tent city in front of his office until he resigns," J.L. Chestnut, an attorney for the farmers.

Jeff Woodward, a member of the United Auto Workers, whose family farms in Mississippi, attended the farmers press conference. He works at Mitsubishi Motors in Normal, Illinois, where there is "a racial discrimination lawsuit in the works. The situation is like what the Black farmers had to go through."

Dorothy Barker, a dairy farmer who along with her husband Phillip Barker lost their farm in 1981, said at the farmers' press conference, "We have lost our will to farm under bad conditions, but we have not lost our will to fight."

Growers push fake union on farm workers in Watsonville

BY JIM ALTENBERG

SAN FRANCISCO — A new attack by California's giant strawberry growers against the United Farm Workers (UFW) opened July 16 when an antiunion outfit known as the "Coastal Berry Workers Committee" filed petitions with the state Agricultural Labor Relations Board (ALRB) for

a representation election at Coastal Berry Co. in Watsonville, California. Coastal is California's largest strawberry producer.

UFW officials have denounced the election as a sham. The aim of "a grower group calling itself a union," said UFW president Arturo Rodriguez, is "to block a real union for the workers." Rodriguez called on the ALRB to dismiss the petition, which would require that Coastal workers vote July 23 to allow the fake union as their bargaining agent. A similar anti-UFW petition was dismissed last February at Scheid Vineyards in nearby Monterey County. Union spokesperson Joslyn Sherman told the *Militant* in a telephone interview that workers left the fields July 20. They have held a vigil at the ALRB office in Salinas for two days, drawing crowds as large as 200. Union protests

at the state capitol have been similar sized, and are planned to run for a week. The UFW has not requested to be on the ballot, Sherman said, explaining that an environment of intimidation made any fair vote impossible.

On July 1 antiunion thugs invaded the Silliman Ranch and attacked farm workers as they prepared to go to work. They beat workers and threw strawberry boxes everywhere, stopping them from working. Three workers were injured. One of the leaders of the attack, Jose Guadalupe Fernandez, filed the petition for the election. Fernandez was later arrested for attacking Santa Cruz county cops who came to the ranch.

Union officials charged that Coastal foremen and supervisors collected signatures for the sham union by threatening berry pick-

ers if they did not sign. The company held a July 14 meeting on the Silliman Ranch to back the petition. Foremen extended lunch hours and watched workers to make sure everyone signed. Workers were told that the UFW wanted to throw all the undocumented workers off the ranch, that the UFW would steal their money, and that they "knew what would happen" if they did not sign.

The UFW has also presented evidence of the antiunion group's financial ties to the growers. A UFW lawsuit against the Agricultural Workers Committee has turned up checks issued to the group from the Western Growers Association and farms making up the Driscoll strawberry distributor.

Jim Altenberg is a member of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers.

National Organization for Women meets

BY SUSAN ANMUTH

ROCHESTER, New York — More than 700 people attended the National Organization for Women's conference July 10–12. It was held here to commemorate the first gathering of women's rights activists in 1848, and delegates drafted a "Declaration of Sentiments 1998."

The declaration states, "We are committed to a feminist ideology and reaffirm our historic commitment to gaining equality for women, assuring safe, legal and accessible abortion and full reproductive freedom, combating racism, stopping violence against women, ending bigotry based on sexual orientation, and ending discrimination based

on color, ethnicity, national origin, age, disability, size, childbearing capacity or choices, or parental or marital status."

Eleanor Smeal, past president of NOW and founder of the Feminist Majority, as well as current NOW president Patricia Ireland were keynote speakers.

The NOW leadership emphasized its orientation to electing feminist candidates, overwhelmingly from the Democratic Party. Geraldine Ferraro, Democratic Party candidate for Senate in New York and 1984 vice presidential candidate, and Lieutenant-Governor Betsy McDonough Ross, Democratic contender for New York governor, both ad-

dressed the gathering.

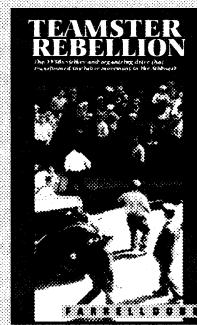
A number of women who want to press for visible street actions for women's rights participated in the conference. Several dozen young women came to the conference, many attending their first NOW gathering. There was interest in the general strike in Puerto Rico and upcoming July 25 rallies for Puerto Rican independence and freeing political prisoners. In discussion numerous participants raised the need to ally with other fighters, particularly around the question of racism.

Susan Anmuth is a member of the United Auto Workers in Edison, New Jersey.

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'Independence is not simply a good idea,

Puerto Rican independence leader Rafael Cancel Miranda speaks on the

BY VERÓNICA POSES
AND MARTÍN KOPPEL

The following interview with Rafael Cancel Miranda was conducted in Cabo Rojo, Puerto Rico, on July 1, 1998, by Verónica Poses and Martín Koppel.

Cancel Miranda is one of the best-known leaders of the struggle for Puerto Rican independence. He was one of the five Nationalists who spent more than a quarter century in U.S. prisons for their pro-independence activities.

In 1949, as Washington prepared to go to war against Korea, Cancel Miranda, then 18 years old, was sentenced to two years in prison for his refusal to be drafted into the U.S. army.

In 1954, Cancel Miranda, together with Andrés Figueroa Cordero, Irving Flores, and Lolita Lebrón, carried out an armed protest in the U.S. Congress in Washington, D.C., in order to draw international attention to the Puerto Rico's colonial status. The four were sentenced to prison terms ranging from 50 to 75 years. Four years earlier, Oscar Collazo had participated in an armed attack on the Blair House, the temporary residence of President Harry Truman; he was originally sentenced to death, but the sentence was later commuted to life in prison. The five Puerto Rican nationalists became the longest-held political prisoners in the Americas.

Over the following years, a broad international campaign for the release of the five *independentista* prisoners developed. Under this worldwide pressure, the U.S. government was eventually forced to release them. U.S. president James Carter released Figueroa Cordero in 1978, when he was already dying of cancer. Cancel Miranda and the other three were freed in 1979. On their return home they were welcomed at the San Juan airport by an enthusiastic crowd of 7,000.

Since then Cancel Miranda has continued fighting and speaking out in public around the world for his country's independence and for the release of the Puerto Ricans who today are in U.S. prisons because of their pro-independence activity. Over the past year he has been invited to speak on college campuses by student groups in dozens of cities, both in Puerto Rico and the United States. He has spoken at a number of meetings commemorating 100 years of struggle against imperialism in Puerto Rico and Cuba.

Cancel Miranda will be one of the guests of honor at the July 25 pro-independence rally in Guánica, where, 100 years ago on that date, U.S. troops invaded in order to put Puerto Rico under Washington's colonial boot.

Poses is a member of the National Executive Committee of the Young Socialists. Koppel is the editor of the Spanish-language socialist magazine *Perspectiva Mundial*. The interview was conducted during the strike by 6,400 telephone workers opposing the sale of the state-owned telephone



Militant photos: Above, Dan Dickeson; Left, Nancy Cole
For a quarter century Washington held five Puerto Rican political prisoners. Above, Rafael Cancel Miranda and other freed Nationalists return to San Juan in September 1979, welcomed by a crowd of 7,000. Left, Cancel Miranda during a celebration of 100 years of struggle against U.S. imperialism April 3 in Philadelphia.

company, which the administration of Gov. Pedro Rosselló plans to sell to a U.S.-led consortium.

The translation and footnotes are by the *Militant*.

Poses: In the last few days we've visited the telephone workers' picket lines in San Juan. We've seen how this strike has drawn support from many other workers in Puerto Rico who see this struggle as their own. One of the things that struck us is the sight of so many Puerto Rican flags. It seems the flag has become the symbol of the strike, and that this strike registers not only the growing resistance by the working class but a resurgence of nationalist sentiment here. Could you tell us what this struggle represents today?

Cancel Miranda: This strike, as the workers themselves explain, is no longer simply a strike of the telephone workers; it's a strike of the people. It is a struggle against the sale of our country. The national patrimony of our people is being sold.

What's happening with the telephone company is happening with the hospitals. The government is privatizing hospitals, which will create more unemployment. Even the prisons are being privatized. If this continues, they're going to sell off the Electrical Power Authority.

The people are defending their own survival as a people. And it's not the U.S. flag

that represents our people. It's not the invaders' flag. It's not Rockefeller's flag. It's the Puerto Rican flag.

So the strikers have taken it up as their symbol. Even children are carrying it on the picket lines, everyone. When people begin to free themselves from ideological and political confusion — from all the cobwebs that have been stuck in our heads to deform our minds — they begin to discover themselves.

Poses: At the same time, most workers don't necessarily support the struggle for Puerto Rican independence. How would you explain this?

Cancel Miranda: First of all, in Puerto Rico you can't gauge what workers want or don't want by the outcome of colonial elections. Because here people don't vote for ideological reasons. They vote to resolve immediate problems.

Here the only ones who vote ideologically are the supporters of independence.

There are thousands of people who vote for the PNP [Progressive National Party] who are not voting for statehood, but who think a politician might solve some problems. If the PNP wins, PNP supporters always get thousands of government jobs. If the PPD [Popular Democratic Party] wins, it's the same thing.¹

¹ In Puerto Rico there are two colonialist parties. The New Progressive Party (PNP), to which

But those voting for the PNP or PPD are not necessarily against independence, or for statehood or for commonwealth status.

There's a saying here, that if you scratch a Puerto Rican, you're going to find a nationalist inside. You're going to find in him or her a defender of the flag, a defender of what it means to be Puerto Rican.

Now, there is a small group here — and it's not workers — that genuinely is against independence. It's the bourgeoisie that directly benefits from colonial rule. You'll see them with their big houses and mansions. It is a semi-bourgeoisie, because here there isn't a true bourgeoisie. It's a puppet, intermediary bourgeoisie.

But workers aren't tied to those colonial interests because they don't live that kind of life. They live through their work, their knowledge and skills.

U.S. imperialism controls our country socially, politically, and economically. We are a militarily occupied country — we're saturated by U.S. military bases. Now they want to transfer the U.S. Southern Command here from Panama.

They control the mass media. They control our schools. They indoctrinate us from the time we're children. They tell you who to hate and who not to hate. They can even indoctrinate you to hate yourself.

The first time I was expelled from school, when I was six years old, in 1937, it was because I didn't want to pledge allegiance to the U.S. flag. I refused. From the time you're a child they keep trying to impose on you loyalty to the invaders of your country.

It's a miracle you still see thousands of Puerto Ricans waving the Puerto Rican flag. It's an ideological miracle — if that's possible — given the 100 years of colonialism we've been through under U.S. imperialism.

I wouldn't be surprised to see them carrying the U.S. flag, since from the time you're a child they tell you that Superman and Wonder Woman and Rambo and John Wayne are your heroes. What should be surprising, and what is great about our people, is that we continue to stand on our feet.

Even the most radical among us is somewhat colonized; you can't help it. I was saved by my 28 years in prison — I've been colonized for 28 fewer years than others.

Koppel: How can the majority be won to the perspective of independence?

Cancel Miranda: We have to reach out to the greatest number of our people with the truth and the need for independence. Independence is not simply a nice ideal. It is a necessity.

We have to reach the new generations, so they will continue the struggle until the time comes when different forces in the world come together and strengthen our struggle. We are part of the world, and what happens all over the world affects our country.

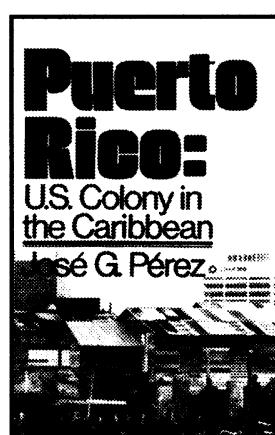
The United States uses our young people as cannon fodder in their wars. In the Vietnam War, Puerto Rico had the second-highest casualties proportionally to its population — compared to all the U.S. states — after Hawaii. The same thing happened in the Korean War.

They sent us to kill Dominicans in the Dominican Republic in 1965. When they invaded Panama in 1989, they sent us to kill Panamanians, who are our brothers and sisters.

Before the Gulf War, nobody here knew who Saddam Hussein was. But in one week they got the Puerto Rican people to hate Saddam Hussein, through their control of the media, and then everyone was saying that Saddam was the devil.

I asked on the radio the other day, "What are Puerto Ricans doing in Bosnia?" If Rockefeller wants to send his sons to fight in Bosnia, let him do it. But he's not going to send his sons to Bosnia. He's going to send your sons, the sons of John Doe and Mary Jane.

So young people are affected by this co-



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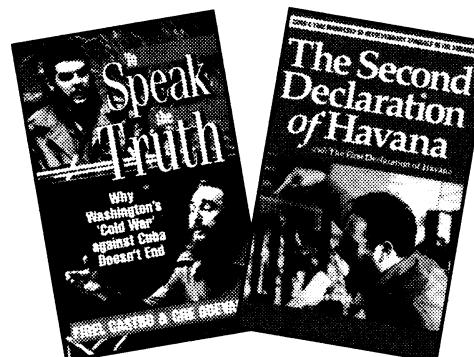
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it is a necessity'

fight against U.S. rule

colonial reality.

We have to show workers why independence is in their interests as workers: so they can be the owners of their country and their factories, so they can be the owners of what they produce. So that everything doesn't end up in the coffers of Wall Street. So that it stays here for their development.

We have to explain what annexation would mean. If Puerto Rico were to be made a state, they would treat us exactly like they treat our communities in New York, Connecticut, Chicago, and Los Angeles.

When I got out of prison in 1979, I told my people from the beginning that we're going to end up on reservations like the Indians if we're not an independent country. It's happening. I could take you to housing projects, in nearby Mayagüez, where thousands of Puerto Rican families live, and which have been turned into reservations. They have them fenced in and access is controlled by the police and the National Guard. You have to identify yourself to enter and leave your home. They search your car as if you were in prison.

As Pedro [Albizu Campos]² said 60 years ago, if we don't free ourselves, we will go from being masters to being serfs, from being owners to being squatters. And right now we Puerto Ricans are squatters in our own country. Others are in charge, not us.

Who controls the Customs in Puerto Rico? The U.S. does. They control our commerce, both foreign and domestic trade. Who controls immigration? The U.S. does. To leave Puerto Rico for another country, we must ask permission from the U.S. State Department. Even this little colonial governor, Rosselló, has to ask their permission.



Thousands of Brazilian oil workers march in May 1995 during fight against government plans to open oil industry to private capitalists. "What happens all over the world affects our country," said Cancel Miranda.

It is for the same reasons that we Nationalists do not believe in plebiscites, because the U.S. controls the colonial elections. They use elections to cover up our colonial status and pretend there is democracy. But they control everything here, even the military. They are occupying our country militarily. Under these conditions — when you have a gun aimed at your head, and when they control your life socially, politically, and economically — there can be no free vote.

We Nationalists say: first, transfer all powers to the Puerto Rican people. Demilitarize our country. Remove all U.S. military bases and repressive agencies from Puerto Rico, and then we'll decide. Then we can talk.

Our people enjoyed a few months of freedom during the transfer of power between Spain and the United States. In 1897 we won a measure of autonomy, after many years of struggle. We had our own postage stamps, our own Puerto Rican currency, our own parliament, our own Customs. We had control over our own foreign trade; we sold to whomever we wished. When the U.S.

showed up in 1898, that came to an end.³

This struggle is difficult for a people that has been colonized for so many years, because colonial rule is like alcoholism or worse. As hard as it is to detoxify yourself from alcoholism, it's even harder to detoxify yourself from a colonial mindset, because you have to get rid of so many lies and complexes that they've drilled into your head.

The only defeat is when you give up, or when you believe they're so invulnerable that you can't even look at them, because you think you're going to die from just looking at them. They drum this into your head just like they did to the Indians.

The Spaniards would never let the Indians see their dead, because they wanted to create the myth that they were immortal. The Indians would never see them die and they would say, "We'd better leave them alone. Those people don't die." But then they put some of the Spaniards in a river and they drowned, as the legend goes. That's when the Indians started fighting.⁴

They fill us with myths. How do we shatter these myths? Reality often takes care of that.

Koppel: Could you point to some of the recent experiences of the Puerto Rican people that help shatter those myths?

Cancel Miranda: Right now you're seeing how a myth is being shattered. People have always been fed the myth that we're a docile people. Except when the imperialists use us in their army for their wars. Then we're fighters.

But both of you have been witnessing the fact that this is not a docile people. In face of the reality — the threat of not being able to survive and feed their children and have a



Militant/Martín Koppel

Strikers and supporters picket in San Juan against the sell-off of the state-owned telephone company July 7. Many youth have been attracted to this labor battle.

is what the colonial powers fear. When a people realize their own strength, they fight.

The people have started to see what the forces of repression are. The mass media can't keep people from seeing this, although the television stations have tried to distort the facts. But they couldn't edit out how the police busted workers' heads — how they grabbed them by their feet and dragged them along the ground as they bled.

It was then that a lot of people who wouldn't have become involved got involved. Because human beings have the capacity to become indignant. When we lose the ability to become outraged over something like that, we have lost our sensibility. And when you lose your sensibility, you're no more than a walking hunk of meat.

The myth about this little colonial governor is also being shattered. Now many are seeing him as he really is. They foster the myth here that those who are in power are know-it-alls, that they're infallible. The Pope stopped claiming to be infallible, but they still use that system here.

There's the myth that you can't do anything. But in Cuba today you see those signs that say, real big, "Sí se puede!" [Yes, we can do it!] We can confront imperialism. In Cuba they've done it.

Koppel: You were pointing out that what happens in Puerto Rico is very much tied to events in the world. Could you say a little about that?

Cancel Miranda: What's happening in Puerto Rico isn't just happening in Puerto Rico. It's part of globalization, of neoliberalism.

When I was in Guatemala seven or eight months ago, the talk of those puppets in Guatemala was the same arguments you hear from Rosselló on privatization. They wanted to privatize the telecommunications system. They said it was necessary in order to compete in the world. In order to compete, we're supposed to give up everything!

In Panama, it's the same argument regarding the privatization of the Panama Canal. And in other Latin American countries they use the same reasoning to justify turning over our resources. We're a classic colony, but — with the exception of Cuba — the other countries are semicolonies, usually controlled by the U.S. Embassy, which is where the orders are given. The presidents are like the one in Panama, [Guillermo] Endara, who they proclaimed president on a U.S. military base during the 1989 invasion.

In Venezuela the International Monetary Fund caused people to get killed because it insisted the government raise people's taxes so they could pay the foreign debt, and when protests broke out they were repressed. The same thing happened in the Dominican Republic a few years ago. The IMF is pressur-

ing those countries.

This is going to create greater social imbalances between the few who have a lot and the many who have very little. And sooner or later, what you're seeing today in Puerto Rico is going to happen. Sooner or later people will find a way to fight.

This situation is also going to create discontent among workers in the United States. They're going to attempt to crush workers there too.

Here in Puerto Rico, as in the prisons, we serve as a laboratory: the U.S. imperialists test out here what they will later attempt there. Like when they surround the neighborhoods with the cops and National Guard, who according to them are fighting drugs and crime.

Poses: One of the things you see in the telephone workers strike is the involvement of many students and other youth.

Cancel Miranda: Yes, the sale of the telephone company doesn't just affect the worker. It also affects the worker's children.

At the University of Puerto Rico, they've cut about \$40 million from education funding, and students have carried out some protest strikes. They're shifting funds from the public schools to private schools, under the pretext that the funds will go to scholarships to allow students to study at the school of their choice. That is, they're giving more funds to the private schools and taking them away from public schools.

If the telephone company is sold off, more than \$200 million in income that the telephone company, as a public corporation, contributed to the Puerto Rican education system, will be gone. And who does that affect — the sons and daughters of Mister So and So, Mister Moneybags? No, the children of John Doe and Mary Jane, who don't have financial resources.

You can explain a thousand different theories, but nothing is more convincing than the brutal reality that you feel and live. And what you saw there is a people who are confronting a reality that there is no longer any escape from. And on Tuesday [July 7] you're going to see thousands and thousands of Puerto Ricans joining the general strike. The students' future lies here.

There is a resurgence of youth that reminds me of my youthful years. I've spoken with a lot of students. Young students with a fighting spirit come visit me here.

I always tell them: Listen to the old folks, but don't follow them! Because old people become very conservative.

And it's not just here. Not long ago I was invited to a university in Champaign, Illinois, to give the keynote address — imagine, they invited someone who had fired shots at U.S. congressmen in Washington. It was the Indo-Afro-Latin student group that invited me.

In less than two and a half months I spoke at seven or eight universities in the United States. And the young people identified with me. It's not me they're welcoming — it's what I represent that they have inside themselves, a reaffirmation of who they are and

Continued on Page 10

² Pedro Albizu Campos was the central leader of the Nationalist Party and the independence movement in Puerto Rico from the 1930s through the 1950s. He spent many years in U.S. prisons for his anti-imperialist activities.

³ In 1897 the Spanish colonial government granted Puerto Rico broad autonomous powers. This concession was a result of the Cuban war for independence, in which the Spanish forces had been militarily defeated. The Cuban Revolutionary Party, which led the struggle in Cuba, had a Puerto Rico Section, and the pro-autonomy liberals in Puerto Rico threatened to ally themselves with the revolutionaries if greater autonomy was not granted. This situation ended a few months later, however, when the Spanish-Cuban-American war of 1898 broke out and Washington invaded Cuba, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico.

⁴ According to legend, at one point the Taíno Indians in Puerto Rico captured a Spanish soldier near the Añasco River. They decided to see if he was really immortal by holding his head underwater in the river. If after a short while he was still alive, they said, then the Spaniards were immortal. But when they lifted up his head again, the Spanish soldier had drowned.

Saturn workers vote overwhelmingly to authorize strike

BY MEG NOVAK

SPRING HILL, Tennessee — On July 19 more than 5,000 members of United Auto Workers Local 1853 voted to authorize a strike against Saturn, a division of General Motors. The vote, which carried by a 95 percent majority, authorizes union officials to call a strike as early as July 24, although negotiations between the union and the company were set to resume July 21. It would be the first strike ever at this plant.

The vote comes four months after a referendum to enter under the national UAW contract with GM was rejected by union members by a margin of 2-1. The plant in Spring Hill, which opened eight years ago and employs some 7,200 workers, is GM's only U.S. assembly plant currently producing cars. GM has responded to the parts shortage created by strikes at two facilities in Flint, Michigan, by laying off more than 175,000 workers in Canada, the United States, and Mexico.

The Saturn plant has been touted worldwide as an innovative "partnership" between union members and the auto bosses. Workers here have a different contract than the nationwide agreement between the UAW and GM. The contract at Saturn is based on a "risk and reward" pay program under which workers average 12 percent less in hourly wages than workers at other GM

plants, but can add to their base pay by reaching certain goals. The "equal partnership" is also supposed to allow Saturn workers to have more input in decisions and provide for almost no layoffs. The company is now planning to build one of its newest model cars, the LS mid-sized sedan, as well as major Saturn components, at other plants.

"Job security is the number one issue," said Michael Branch, who has worked at the Saturn plant for eight years. He has worked for GM for 21 years, and like many of the workers *Militant* correspondents spoke to, Branch moved to Tennessee to work at Saturn. "Nobody wants to strike," he said, "but we will support our union."

"GM needs to return every worker to their original seniority date and give them \$20,000 a year for pain and suffering," stated Todd Sapelak, who has worked at Saturn since 1991. He was first hired at GM in 1979, worked for one year and then was laid off for five; called back for three years, and then laid off for three. Sapelak said he moved away from his family and friends, primarily because he thought there would be more job security at Saturn. "At Saturn, GM is taking more and more decisions away from the union on the risk and reward program," commented Jim Sprague. Saturn is the third GM plant he has worked in. He recently walked the picket line with strikers in Flint

125 protest racist leaflets in New Jersey city



Some 125 people protested the distribution of racist leaflets within a four-block area in Elizabeth, New Jersey, July 4-5. The anonymous leaflets were left on lawns and taped onto fences in the predominantly Black area. Susan Anmuth, Socialist Workers candidate for U.S. Congress, marched in the demonstration.

Interview with 'independentista' Cancel Miranda

Continued from Page 9
who want to be.

Poses: In the United States and also in Puerto Rico there was a successful campaign for your freedom and that of the other Nationalist prisoners. Today, in 1998, there still are Puerto Rican political prisoners in U.S. jails. Could you say something about the campaign that was waged for your release?

Cancel Miranda: The campaign to free the 16 prisoners today is more advanced than the campaign on our behalf was at the time we got out of prison.

But at the time we got out, there existed a balance of power in the world. The socialist forces and the countries of the so-called Third World, on one hand, and the forces of U.S. imperialism on the other. The U.S. government respected the Soviet government militarily, because they had weapons that could mutually destroy each other.

Our defense campaign had even reached the United Nations Committee on Decolonization and the Non-Aligned Countries. The United States was on this "human rights" campaign, with Carter and [U.S. Ambassador to the UN Andrew] Young. And everywhere people would say: "How can you speak of human rights when you've had five Nationalists, who have defended independence for their country, locked up for so many years?" We were like a bone stuck in their throats.

So their human rights thing wasn't working for them as long as we were in prison. This was an advantage for the campaign on our behalf.

Now, internationally, there is no longer a balance between two powers trying to attract other governments to their side; today the United States considers itself a unilateral power. So they're interested not so much in showing other countries of the world that they're democratic, but rather that they're powerful.

Just now there was a great opportunity. Clinton was over there telling China to release the political prisoners in that country. And he blabbers on and on telling Cuba to free the political prisoners that they claim are in Cuba. But Clinton has political prisoners under his very nose, where a signature by him would set them free, and he does nothing.

We weren't freed from prison because suddenly the U.S. government, like St. Paul, saw the light. They freed us from prison because of international pressure.

We were the only prisoners in U.S. penal history who came out of jail setting condi-

tions on the jailers, rather than the jailers imposing conditions on us. Anyone can get out of prison. What counts isn't going to prison or getting out of prison. It's why you go in and how you come out.

They were willing to free us if we accepted conditions. FBI and CIA agents would come visit us at the prison, saying that if we asked for a pardon they would release us the very next day. They even sent that congressman from New York, Robert García, who said that if we signed these papers and swore we would never shoot anymore, and later that we wouldn't get involved in the struggle, they would release us.

But it was a victory. We came out standing on our feet.

That was thanks to the struggle waged by other people, including the *Militant*, which wrote articles on our behalf.

Today the campaign for the Puerto Rican political prisoners has been taken to international tribunals, to the United Nations, to Nobel Prize laureates who have signed petitions. More than 200,000 signatures from the Puerto Rican people, both here and in the United States, have appealed for their release.

Courts often sentence criminals to three or four years, and if they're from the Ku Klux Klan maybe even less than a year. Why have 18 years passed and these *independentistas* — people who have never even received a traffic ticket in their lives — why are they still in prison?

The *independentistas* aren't criminals. They are revolutionaries who are confronting their system. That's why they [the imperialists] view us as their enemies.

Koppel: The revolutionary government of Cuba has campaigned on behalf of the independence of Puerto Rico and the release of the Puerto Rican political prisoners. What is your view of what the Cuban revolution represents?

Cancel Miranda: The hope of us all. As long as Cuba is there, there is hope that we will be able to go through those doors. If Cuba falls, our struggle will take many more years. I'm not referring just to Puerto Rico but to all our peoples. So far, Cuba is the only country that U.S. financial and military interests don't control.

Cuba is also a psychological weapon for our peoples, because they instill these complexes to make us think that without the Yankees we just can't survive. The sun would stop shining. The moon would fall.

Yet Cuba has survived. No only without the Yankees. In spite of the Yankees, and in spite of all confrontations and the U.S.

during the two-week summer shut down in Spring Hill. "Eight years ago when I hired in here it was like paradise, but the last three or four years, it's just another GM plant."

The union also claims that GM is trying to unfairly cut second quarter pay. UAW shop committee chairman Mike Bennett said the automaker initially reduced second quarter output by about 5,500 units, as sales have slipped. Even though workers then made up lost output, the union claims the company will only pay them \$390 of the \$1,400 bo-

nuses they are owed.

Shelley Reed, who has been at the plant for seven years, said, "Saturn is using the national strike to back out on quarterly pay.... If they want to fight with us every quarter, then let us have our money on each paycheck."

Meg Novak is a member of the United Steelworkers of America in Birmingham, Alabama. Rich Stuart, a member of the USWA Local 12014, contributed to this article.

blockade. Without that blockade, Cuba would not have to go through these crises. But it has weathered the crisis and has survived.

For me, Cuba goes much beyond a question of economic survival. It gives you a sense of the dignity of life. Before, when you saw a Latino in the U.S. movies, we were either someone's sidekick, or we were a "Latin Lover" to entertain them. They ridiculed us.

But ever since Fidel [Castro], they learned to respect us. Because Fidel and the Cuban revolutionaries are no one's sidekick. Fidel makes me proud, just like the pride Sandino gives me.⁵

In Cuba today, life is not dictated by appearances as it is here. Here under this system, your worth is measured by how much you carry in your pockets — even if you're a gangster. Your person isn't worth anything. You're worth something if you have a luxury car, a Volvo, a Mercedes-Benz, whatever. Your worth is measured by the car you own, not by how you use it. But even a monkey can drive a Volvo, and it doesn't stop being a monkey.

In Cuba I feel at home. I'm not giving up my country, because I don't abandon my sick mother. But there I can call people *compañero*. I don't have to call anyone Honorable or Excellency or anything.

Under the system that exists in Cuba, your worth is determined by what you are. And when I talk about the system in Cuba, I'm talking about the socialist system. Your worth is measured by how you share with others. Under this system your worth is measured by what you own, and they keep us at war with each other.

For me, Cuba dignifies people, it humanizes people. This system dehumanizes people. It's dog-eat-dog. That's the philosophy. And they keep teaching you in order to strip you of your human values. They keep instilling money-grubbing values so you will serve them better as a tool and to make you accept degradation and humiliation because they've taken away your values. Only people who have values are capable of feeling indignation and anger.

I was always a nationalist and defender of my country. But I'm a nationalist because I'm a socialist. And I'm a socialist because I'm a nationalist. I believe in socialism for my country because I want the best for my country and for the world.

⁵ Augusto César Sandino led an army of workers and peasants against the U.S. military occupation of Nicaragua between 1927 and 1933.

Don Pedro always said that first you have to have the key to the house, so you can then decide what color to paint it. He said that first we have to fight for independence and be free; then we'll be masters of our country. Then we'll be able to decide what system to have.

But as long as we're not a free country, it's the United States, the financial interests on Wall Street, the military interests in the Pentagon — which are one and the same — that will decide what kind of life we live.

Cuba was able to be socialist because it was already sovereign. It was able to dictate, within its sovereignty, the way of life it would live.

I believe in socialism as much as I believe in independence for my country. I wouldn't want a free country — with all we have sacrificed throughout our history of struggle — so that two or three parasites could take over the lives of our people, could enrich themselves at the expense of our people. I don't want that kind of independence.

Now, as long as the Soviet Union existed, for many people it was almost a cachet to be a socialist — it was almost fashionable. Because there existed a power. Later it turned out that there were a lot of socialists because of the existence of the socialist power, not because they truly believed in socialism.

Many who once could even have told you how many hairs Marx and Engels and Lenin had on their beards, today don't utter a word about socialism. Today some have thrown themselves into what they used to criticize, nationalism, which is the only door they have left to continue to struggle.

Previously, they wouldn't use the portrait of Pedro Albizu Campos, who stood for the affirmation of Puerto Rico. They would use — and I don't criticize them — the portraits of Lenin and the others. But now you don't see portraits of Lenin or Marx or Engels anywhere.

But if you believe in socialism, you believe in it even if you're alone. You don't believe in it because there are 20,000 socialist countries or because there is one socialist country.

So, now that many who used to profess themselves socialists — because of the existence of certain powers, because they could travel to the Soviet Union — no longer do so, now I say I'm a socialist. Now they can't tell me, "He says that because the Soviet power is there." No.

I'm not saying it because there are some socialist powers somewhere. I say it because I believe in socialism, period.

New Orleans: 7,000 rally for union rights

BY STEPHEN BLOODWORTH

NEW ORLEANS — Some 7,000 workers took to the streets here July 19 to demand their right to organize, join, and be represented by labor unions in this southern port city.

Hundreds of workers wearing blue "Justice for Avondale Workers" T-shirts and hundreds more carrying placards reading "Stop Public Money for Private Profit; Hotel Workers Yes, Developers No!" composed two of the largest contingents in the spirited demonstration. A large group of American Federation of Teachers members, in town for their annual convention, poured out of their meeting to join the marching unionists as well.

Pilots Agree member Rodney Johnson, who was fired from his job two days before his union struck the river barge companies April 3 and is now a worker in the Avondale shipyards, said, "I came to support all of us: pilots, teachers, Avondale, and hotel workers. We have to stick together."

Union recognition is the key issue for more than 3,500 shipyard workers. Avondale Industries Inc., which designs, builds, and overhauls both commercial and military ships, is the largest private industrial employer in the state. In 1993, in response to the low pay, unsafe working con-

ditions, and numerous other grievances, workers filed a petition with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) to be represented by the New Orleans Metal Trades Council. The company challenged the union's victory in the election, but in April of 1997 the NLRB overruled Avondale's objections, certifying the union by a vote of 1,950 to 1,632.

To this day, the company refuses to negotiate with the union and has waged an ongoing campaign of harassment against union activists. After 22 years at Avondale, Edwin Brown said, "I was fired trying to form a union. They claimed I parked in the wrong parking space. When I objected to this, they charged me with insubordination and using obscene language. Avondale won't recognize the union we voted to have over five years ago." In February, a judge found that Avondale had violated labor law 100 times and ordered the company to reinstate 28 workers and rescind disciplinary action on another 15.

Also marching in force were hundreds of convention center and hotel workers. A hotel housekeeper in New Orleans, a city with one of the most expensive and profitable hotel markets in the country, makes on the average \$5.48 an hour. The Hospitality, Hotel and Restaurants Organizing Council



Militant/Susan LaMont

Avondale shipyard workers were among the 7,000 who rallied in New Orleans July 19

(HOTROC) is campaigning for union recognition of these workers.

The fight for better wages was also a prevalent theme on placards, banners, buttons, and stickers. Latrice Dillon, a 17-year-old high school student marching with a contingent of city workers, said, "I came to see that my parents and friends get a pay raise." Young workers and high school and college students made up a sizable portion of the marchers.

Scores of other union locals were at the protest. Kirk Barnes, an electrician at the

city's convention center and a member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 130, commented, "Business can always come up with a way to justify their profits.... [But] you have to come up with all kinds of reasons to justify why you need a raise, benefits or health insurance. Who wants to work 40 hours or more a week and barely make it while they have such enormous salaries?"

Stephen Bloodworth is a rail worker in Birmingham, Alabama.

Machinists discuss, debate contract at Northwest

BY MARY MARTIN

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Machinist union members at Northwest Airlines are conducting contract information discussions

at union meetings around the country in preparation for a July 29 vote on the proposed new contract. The 27,000 International Association of Machinists (IAM)

General Motors strike

Continued from front page

members of UAW Local 651 at the Delphi East parts plant across town.

Both locals are striking GM over health and safety issues, outsourcing, subcontracting, and demands for production "efficiency" through speed up.

In preparation for the arbitration hearings, UAW president Steven Yokich held a meeting in Flint of the GM Council, which is made up of local union officials from each GM plant in the United States.

Some 300 union presidents and plant committee chairpersons attended from across the country. With the 46 members of Local 977 from Marion, Indiana, they joined the picket lines to bring solidarity and contributions for strike expenses. Contributions of \$10, \$20, \$50, or more from individuals and locals at the rally added up to thousands of dollars.

Local 2082 from Albany, Georgia, contributed \$4022. The Albany plant is scheduled to close permanently at the end of July and every one of the 67 workers there donated. Workers from an other GM plant in Laurel, Mississippi, raised more than \$700 for the strikers in Flint.

Charles Chaney went on strike three weeks before his retirement became effective. He had worked 31 years in the Metal Fabrication plant, first as a welder, then in sanitation. He still walks the picket line. "I was in the strike in the 1970s," he said. "I started in this one and I'll be here until we win."

Under the impact of the strike, auto production in the United States dropped by 11 percent in June. This loss of output contributed to the fall in operating capacity in all factories to 80.23 percent, the lowest in five years. The work stoppage and its broader implications contributed to an overall decline in industrial production during June of 0.6 percent, the steepest since the last month of the 1990-1991 recession. The strikes have already impacted on the profitability of many industrial suppliers. GM dealers around the country are registering big losses as their car lots become empty.

The layoffs total 185,300 workers in the United States, Canada, and Mexico. Of the three plants still operating, Oshawa's truck plant shut down July 22 due to lack of parts.

Bosses' competition underlies strike

Even though GM has slashed the work-

force by nearly 300,000 in the last 20 years, the auto giant is still behind its main rivals in squeezing maximum profit out of each worker. According to a study of the auto industry released by Harbour and Associates Inc. (HAI), of the six largest auto producers in North America, GM was not only the second least productive but is also making less money per vehicle than its competitors.

James Harbour, of HAI said, "The point is, to get competitive with Ford, they have to get rid of 38,000 extra people. That's a major issue today." The study claims that for GM to be as efficient as Nissan 54,915 workers must go without cutting production.

Other bosses are watching to see how successful GM will be in finding alternative suppliers and how willing GM workers are to do struck work.

Workers at the GM plant in Romulus made news headlines when they refused to install "alternative" spark plugs and batteries. And, the resistance in Flint continues to spread among GM auto workers. UAW Local 1853 members at GM's Saturn Corp., voted overwhelmingly July 19 to authorize their local officials to strike. Auto Workers in Dayton, Ohio; Indianapolis, Indiana; and at Buick City in Flint have also given their elected leaders permission to call a strike if they can't reach an agreement.

Faced with declining stock prices, increasing frustration and lowered expectations of its shareholders and the financial houses on the one hand; and the threat of more actions from UAW workers on the other, GM board members are proceeding with their confrontational approach, including the lawsuit. GM's spokespeople complain of the "severe impact" of the Flint walkouts; and intense price competition worldwide.

The morale of the Flint strikers remains high inspite of the legal action the bosses have taken against the UAW.

"The same day they sued the union, they were cited at the [GM] plant in Saginaw for the same health and safety violations we're on strike against." This is the way Anner Turner explained their determination. She has worked 26 years at the Metal Fab plant. "We are ready to go back when GM is ready to give us a fair settlement," she said.

Jean Luc Duval and Frank Gorton are members of UAW. Willie M. Reid, also a member of the UAW, contributed to this article.

members who work at Northwest will also take a strike authorization vote on that date. Many of the contract discussion meetings have been heated, according to press reports and union members who participated in them. On July 14 in Minneapolis, more than 2,000 union members at Northwest Airlines attended all-day meetings for the different work shifts to raise their questions with union negotiators. One Machinist member termed the meeting "an all-day 'Vote No' rally." After the meeting, Milo, a union member who works as an inspector at Northwest and asked that his last name not be used, told the *Militant*, "The company's greed knows no bounds. In the past we've fallen for the threat of globalization. But now, people have been more ready than ever to strike. I've never seen this level of unity between the different groups."

IAM members cite numerous provisions of the proposed contract they oppose including:

- the lack of a retroactive pay raise for the two years since the previous contract expired;
- the company's intention to increase part-time workers' hours to 31 hours per week, with no medical or other full-time benefits except for five annual paid holi-

days;

- no protection against layoffs for workers hired after October 1996;
- and no prohibition against further "farming out" or outsourcing of work now done by IAM members.

The proposed contract comes after 20 months of government-mediated negotiations and a decade of concessions taken by Northwest workers, including a 12-15 percent pay cut in 1993. Meanwhile, 10,000 flight attendants at Northwest Airlines, organized by the Teamsters Union, have been without a contract for 22 months. To win public support they have called August 7 airport rallies in Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Honolulu, Los Angeles, Memphis, Minneapolis, New York, Seattle, and San Francisco.

No progress has been reported in the government-mediated negotiations between Northwest Airlines and the Airline Pilots Association (ALPA) which represents 6,200 pilots at Northwest.

Mary Martin is a member of the IAM at Northwest. IAM members Jeff Jones in Minneapolis, Arlene Rubinstein in Atlanta, and Mark Friedman in Los Angeles contributed to this article.

Meatpackers in Canada settle strike

BY JACQUIE HENDERSON

AND BEV BERNARDO

VANCOUVER, British Columbia — Members of United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 1118 voted July 12 by a margin of 357 to 186 to accept a six-year contract. The vote ended the meatpackers' 10-week strike at Fletcher's Fine Foods hog processing plant in Red Deer, Alberta. About 420 of the plant's 635 workers resumed work July 20.

"It's a bad contract; the company got what it wanted," said a former striker who asked the *Militant* not to use his name. Under the terms of the new contract 55 percent of Fletcher's workers will see their wages cut by up to Can\$5.82 an hour (Can\$1=US\$.67). Approximately 45 percent of the strikers, workers with low seniority, will receive an initial wage increase from the previous starting wage of \$8.25 an hour. But the company's base rate will be lowered to \$10.15 from \$15.35 per hour. The basic offer differs little from the one rejected by the unionists in April when they voted to strike.

In order to sweeten the bitterly-opposed wage-cutting proposal, Fletcher's increased the one-time bonuses included in the contract. The bonuses range from a minimum of \$5,500 for a worker that who just started

at the plant to a maximum of \$22,000 for high seniority workers facing wage cuts of almost \$6 an hour.

Workers can also opt to forego the bonus and continue receiving their current wage for another two years when the wage cuts would kick in. Many workers are expected to take the bonus as a severance package. "A lot of us are very disappointed," Joe Clubine told the *Militant*. Clubine, a leaf lard puller with two years at the plant, said his pay will be cut \$1.76 an hour. "The company is going to lose a lot of people. It's not like it's an easy job," he explained.

Fletcher's Fine Foods bosses have lauded the settlement for "ensuring the company's global competitiveness." Since the March settlement by striking UFCW members at Maple Leaf Foods in Burlington, Ontario, which included a 40 percent slash in wages, Fletcher's had been stressing their need to match these cuts. Don Loewen, Fletcher's chairman of the board, greeted the settlement by outlining plans for speeding up production. "This settlement is very timely," he said. "At the end of this month the Red Deer plant will have the capacity to process 8,000 hogs in a single shift."

Jacquie Henderson is a member of the International Association of Machinists.

Ireland: rightist crisis

Continued from front page

Orange Order was let through.

But the predicted mass siege and assault on the Garvagh Road failed to materialize. By July 14 the rightist encampment had dwindled to 300. On July 18 an estimated five tents remained and at one point only three rightists were keeping a token protest. Local Orange leaders organized a rally that day to announce a "switch of tactics." The main unionist daily paper the *Belfast Telegraph* reported that at the rally "the Portadown leaders were disappointed at the turnout." Organizers expected 15,000 people but less than 2,000 showed.

The catalyst for the collapse of the rightist standoff was the murder of three Catholic boys in a loyalist firebomb attack as they slept July 12. Interviewed by GMTV the boys' mother, Chrissie Quinn, was asked if she blamed the Orange Order. She nodded and replied, "It is everybody else that suffers every year because of them. It's the Catholics that suffer.... They [the Orange Order] should not get down that road." Chrissie Quinn is a Catholic. The father of the murdered Jason, Mark and Richard Quinn is Protestant and the boys attended a Protestant school.

This was not the only sectarian firebombing during the 12-day standoff. Eleven Catholic churches were burned and hundreds of homes, schools, churches, and other buildings have been attacked by loyalists, that is those who support or are loyal to continued British rule. Hundreds of Catholic families have been forced from their communities. Some of these loyalist attacks were on RUC officers' homes in retribution for the blocking of the Orange march. Orange Order church ministers who called for the march to end were also threatened.

The majority of the attacks were arbitrary sectarian assaults on Catholic families. The deaths of the Quinn children drew disgust and outrage and lifted the lid on the sectarian nature of the Orange Order and its marches. This outrage applied further pressure to deep fault lines in the sectarian institutions that have historically upheld British colonial rule in Ireland. London has used the Orange Order to foster Protestant supremacy and dispense patronage and privilege to divide and weaken working-class unity against the British rulers.

Rightist Orange Order in crisis

The Orange Order is now in deep crises. Public opinion in ruling-class and nationalist circles point to this crisis as terminal. The unionist *Belfast Telegraph* headlined its opinion column July 18 "Parade Mayhem could be near end of the Road." The Irish edition of the pro-British, pro-business *Sunday Times* headlined its feature on the Orange Order crisis "Marching to the death." The *Irish Times* feature commented, "Most Orangemen live in a time warp, in a world which has long passed...of the British empire conquering the world, of Belfast as a great industrial city and of the Protestant Bible as God's unerring guide to the nation." A special meeting of the ruling grand lodge of the Order takes place August 1 to conduct an inquest into Drumcree in Portadown. Twenty Orange Order chaplains have discussed the option of resigning from the Order.

CORRECTION

A sentence in the article, "U.S. gov't tightens rules on travel to Cuba" on page 14 of *Militant* issue no. 28 incorrectly stated: "We had to scurry around to make new arrangements," recanted [Cliff] DuRand. It should have said that he *recounted* what happened.

CALENDAR

AUSTRALIA

Sydney

Live Phone Hookup from Ireland. An evening with Sinn Fein leaders Mitchell McLaughlin and Dodie McGuinness. Fri., July 31, 8 p.m. *Communication Workers Union, 1st floor, 741 George St. (close to Central Station).* Sponsored by Australian Aid for Ireland. For more information, call 0419 4188 61.

der if this review is not critical of the stand off. A Belfast chaplain, John Dickinson has already resigned from the Orange Order over its opposition to the Good Friday Agreement and attempts to use Drumcree to undermine the Northern Ireland Assembly.

An editorial on the Orange Order in the nationalist newspaper *An Phoblacht/Republican News* July 9 commented, "What we are witnessing is the dying wasp-sting of an ideology which has underpinned the northern state from its inception. The six country entity was established as a 'Protestant state for a Protestant people' and it was through the Orange lodges that this ideology was maintained among the various classes straddled by unionism. The growing confidence of the nationalist community in the six counties in recent years and the political changes heralded by the Good Friday Agreement...has had a huge effect on those who are afraid of change...."

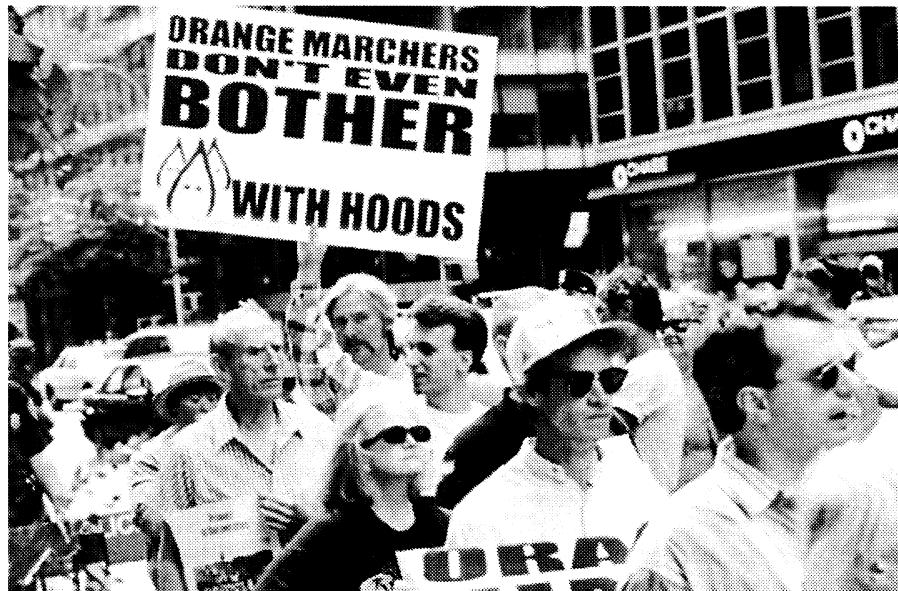
Unbroken nationalist confidence

This unbroken nationalist confidence was reflected in the increased vote for nationalist candidates in the June elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly set up after the Good Friday Agreement. British government attempts to contain the nationalist struggle for change have prompted the shift in response to the Orange stand off at Drumcree.

When London ordered the British troops and RUC to beat a path for the Orange march down Garvagh in 1996 and 1997, it fueled a greater determination by nationalists to resist and increased their support.

This nationalist confidence and resistance was evident in the Garvagh Road community. Eilish Creaney is a member of the management committee of the Drumcree Community Centre off the Garvagh Road. She told *Militant* reporters how the residents organized together during the standoff. The center was a base for community meetings and organization and a pirate radio station

Hundreds rally across United States in solidarity with Irish fighters



The Irish People/AI Beck

Some 200 people rallied in New York, above, with hundreds more in half a dozen other cities nationwide, in solidarity with the Irish fighters on Garvagh and Lower Ormeau Road the weekend of July 11-12. Demonstrators held signs comparing the Ku Klux Klan with the rightist Orange Order, who provocatively march through Catholic areas. The protests were called by Irish Northern Aid (NORAID) and the Irish Parades Emergency Committee.

kept everyone informed. "At one point we thought a deal had been done to let the Orange march through. As soon as we got the news we called a meeting. It was eleven at night but the community hall was packed. Those who had to stay at home were informed of our decisions through the radio station." The center was used to receive and distribute food and other essentials, which were brought in solidarity convoys from collections in other parts of Ireland. During the siege residents could not get through to go to work or the town center shops.

Creaney had special praise for "our young people who refused to get provoked by the RUC and the British troops who sealed the

area with armed checkpoints and stop and search checks." Within a 10 minute walk up the Garvagh Road July 19, these reporters observed three fully armed British foot patrols, and a number of convoys of armored personnel carriers with troops atop, guns on show. Creaney said she believed that after the Quinn killings more Protestants would see that the Orange Order had gone too far. "Ordinary decent Protestants will say 'I'm not part of this.'" Asked what she thought about the future for the Orange marches down the Garvagh Road she replied, "That now depends on the British government. Will they stand up to the Or-

Continue on Page 14

MILITANT LABOR FORUMS

ILLINOIS

Chicago

Union Fight Backs Deepen. Panel of union activists. Sat., Aug. 1, 7:30 p.m. Dinner 6 p.m. 1223 N. Milwaukee Ave. (At Division stop on CTA Blue Line). Donation: \$4. Tel: (773) 342-1780.

PENNSYLVANIA

Pittsburgh

Why Are Coal Miners Being Denied Black Lung Benefits? Report back from eastern Kentucky coal fields. Speaker: Salm Kolis, member

United Steel Workers of America. Fri., July 31, 7:30 p.m. 1103 E. Carson St. Donation: \$4. Tel: (412) 381-9785.

Philadelphia

Eyewitness Report from General Strike in Puerto Rico. Speakers: Nancy Cole, Socialist Workers candidate for U.S. Congress, member of the International Association of Machinists; Edgardo Cortes Pineiro, member of the National Committee to Free Puerto Rican Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War. Thurs., July 30, 7:30 p.m. 1906 South Street. Donation: \$4. Tel: (215) 546-8212.

NEW ZEALAND

Christchurch

The Fight for Maori Rights Today. Fri., July 31, 7:30 p.m.

Socialist Candidate for Mayor Presents A Program for How Working People Can Fight Back to Defend our Rights and Living Standards. Speaker: Ruth Gray, Communist League candidate for Mayor of Christchurch. Fri., Aug. 7, 7:30 p.m.

Both events to be held at 199 High St. Donation: \$3. Tel (03) 365-6055.

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Only in America—There was good news for the Los Angeles army of street dwellers. An anonymous donor paid for 100 brand new shopping carts. The only sour note



Harry Ring

was struck by a police captain who groused that the carts can be used as ladders for break-ins or to conceal stolen property

Catch 22—Pamela Robinson filed a sexual harassment complaint against her boss in the North Carolina Corrections Dept. She went through three hearing levels. At each, it was agreed her evidence was convincing. The ruling? The state can act in harassment cases only if someone is demoted or fired. Also, because Robinson refused to work in the same office with the boss she had “resigned” without notice.

Come on, HMOs?—A study found that many health-care outfits, looking to sign up seniors, focus on winning the healthiest of them.

Some hold recruiting seminars at sites with no wheel chair access.

That's capitalism—To dodge paying benefits Microsoft ordered a July layoff for 5,000 “part-time” employees who have worked a year or longer. Earlier, a class action suit was filed by “permits” who declare they’re “common law” employees entitled to benefits. Speaking of benefits, Microsoft top dog Bill Gates is “worth” some \$57 billion.

The march of science—Japan’s Society of Obstetricians and Gynecology expelled a member for performing an in vitro fertilization with

the eggs of an unwed woman. The society has a bar on “extramarital” in vitro fertilization.

Progress report—Turkey’s top court ruled that wives could no longer be sent to jail for up to three years for adultery. Two years ago, the parliament ended prison terms for male adulterers.

In that sequence?—It was traumatic for CNN prez Ted Turner when his agency and *Time* backed off on their story about the U.S. military using lethal nerve gas against defectors in Laos. He declared it was worse than his Atlanta Braves “losing to the Yankees in the

World Series... the failure of two marriages, and the death of my father.”

Dialog—London *Times* headline: “[Prime Minister Anthony] Blair Sets Up Team to Listen to the Elderly.” Same issue: “Millions Told Their Pensions Could Be Whittled Down.”

Probably shoved someone off the corner—Declared a *Los Angeles Times* headline: “THAILAND: People Find Ways to Cope With Economic Downturn.” An accompanying photo showed an ex-millionaire selling sandwiches on the streets of Bangkok.

‘Power, not diplomacy’ wins battles against bosses

Below we print excerpts from *The History of American Trotskyism: 1928-38*, by James P. Cannon. The book is written by a leading participant in the decade-long effort to establish the Socialist Workers Party. In “The Great Minneapolis Strikes” Cannon relates some of the experiences of socialist workers who were members of the Minneapolis Teamsters 1934 strike. Copyright © 1995 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BY JAMES P. CANNON

All modern strikes require political direction. The strikes of that period brought the government, its agencies, and its institutions into the very center of every situation. A strike leader without some conception of a political line was very much out of date al-

such things as the conflict of class interests one must be prepared to fight....

The third contribution of Trotskyism to the Minneapolis strike—the most interesting and perhaps the most decisive—was that we met the government mediators on their own ground. I tell you, one of the most pathetic things observable in that period was to see how in one strike after another the workers were outmaneuvered and cut to pieces, and their strike broken by the “friends of labor” in the guise of federal mediators.

These slick rascals would come in, take advantage of the ignorance and inexperience and political inadequacy of local leaders, and assure them that they were there as friends. Their assignment was to “settle the trouble” by extorting concessions from the weaker side. Inexperienced and politically unschooled strike leaders were their prey. They had a routine, a formula to catch the unwary. “I am not asking you to give any concession to the bosses, but give me a concession so that I can help you.” Then, after something had been given away through gullibility: “I tried to get a corresponding concession from the bosses but they refused. I think you had better make more concessions: public sentiment is turning against you.” And then pressure and threats: “Roosevelt will issue a statement.” Or, “We will feel obligated to publish something in the papers against you if you aren’t more reasonable and responsible.” Then get the poor greenhorns into conference rooms, keep them there hours and hours on end, and terrorize them. This was the common routine these cynical scoundrels employed.

They came into Minneapolis all greased up for another standard performance. We were sitting there waiting for them. We said, “Come on. You want to negotiate, do you? All right. That is fine.” Of course our comrades put it in the more diplomatic language of the negotiations “protocol,” but that was the gist of our attitude. Well, they never negotiated two cents out of the Trotskyist leaders of Local 574. They got a dose of negotiations and diplomacy which they are still gagging from. We wore out three of them before the strike was finally settled.

A favorite trick of the confidence men known as federal mediators in those days was to assemble green strike leaders in a room, play upon their vanity, and induce them to commit themselves to some kind of compromise which they were not authorized to make. The federal mediators would convince the strike leaders that they were “big shots” who must take a “responsible” attitude. The mediators knew that concessions yielded by leaders in negotiations can very rarely be recalled. No matter how much the workers may oppose it, the fact that the leaders have already committed themselves in public compromises the position of the union and creates demoralization in the ranks.

This routine cut many a strike to pieces in that period. It didn’t work in Minneapolis. Our people weren’t “big shots” in the negotiations at all. They made it clear that their authority was extremely limited, that they were in fact the more moderate and reasonable wing of the union, and that if they took a step out of line they would be replaced on the negotiations committee by other types. This was quite a poser for the strike-butchers who had



“Our people didn’t believe in anybody or anything but the policy of the class struggle and the ability of the workers to prevail by their mass strength and solidarity.” Above, May 1934 Minneapolis Teamster trucking strikers defend their union against cops.

come to Minneapolis with their knives out for unsuspecting sheep. Every once in a while Grant Dunne would be added to the Committee. He would just sit in a corner saying nothing, but scowling every time there was any talk of concessions. The strike was a hard and bitter fight but we had plenty of fun in planning the sessions of the union negotiations committee with the mediators. We despised them and all their wily articles and tricks, and their hypocritical pretenses of good fellowship and friendship for the strikers. They were nothing but the agents of the government in Washington, which in turn is the agent of the employing class as a whole. That was perfectly clear to a Marxist, and we took it as rather an insult for them to assume that we could be taken in by the methods they

employed with novices. They tried it though. Apparently they didn’t know any other methods. But they didn’t make an inch of headway until they got down to cases, put pressure on the bosses, and made concessions to the union. The collective political experience of our movement was very useful in dealing with the federal mediators. Unlike stupid sectarians, we didn’t ignore them. Sometimes we would initiate discussions. But we didn’t let them use us, and we didn’t trust them for one moment. Our general strategy in the strike was to fight it out, not give anything away to anybody, to hold on and fight it out. That was Trotskyist contribution number four. It may appear to be a very simple and obvious prescription, but that is not the case. It was not obvious to the great majority of strike leaders of the time.

—25 AND 50 YEARS AGO—

THE MILITANT

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY/PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE

August 3, 1973

The July strikes in Puerto Rico by firemen and water and electrical workers marked a turning point for the island’s labor movement. For the first time in Puerto Rico, the National Guard was called out against strikers. Thousands of workers demonstrated to protest this strikebreaking action. What was behind the confrontation?

The workers who played the most active role in the recent strikes were sanitation workers; firemen; and the irrigation and electrical workers, who are organized in the Irrigation and Electrical Workers Union (UTIER).

The 1,100-member firemen’s union was protesting outmoded equipment and low wages. For example, there were only four firetrucks with ladders in all of Puerto Rico. Starting wages for firemen are \$385 a month.

The strikes by the firemen and UTIER ended in mid-July. In both cases the government granted concessions. Both radical and bourgeois journalists noted that Puerto Rico’s labor movement is entering a new stage. Under [Luis] Muñoz Marín the labor bureaucracy had been incorporated into the government apparatus. In return it did not engage in any militant struggles that might endanger Muñoz Marín’s scheme to

industrialize Puerto Rico.

THE MILITANT

PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE

NEW YORK, N.Y.

FIVE (5) CENTS

August 9, 1948

General Douglas MacArthur, American imperialism’s brass-hat ruler of Japan has imposed his own version of the Taft-Hartley Slave Act on the public service workers, who have spearheaded labor militancy in Japan. His innovation was not only to prohibit strikes but to abolish collective bargaining with the government.

MacArthur made the above “suggestions” in the form of a letter to Premier Hitoshi Ashida. The “suggestions” further abolish mediation and arbitration machinery under the central Labor Relations Board, ban slowdowns and other “subterfuges” and provide jail terms for one year plus 5,000 yen fines for violators. The Japanese cabinet decided that these “suggestions” “should not be interpreted merely as advice but as a directive overriding all law.”

The Japanese labor movement which has made such splendid strides forward in the past few years is not taking these vicious decrees lying down. The Communications Workers Union, 400,000-strong, is openly defying MacArthur’s strikebreaking and slave edicts by calling a strike for August 7.

From Pathfinder

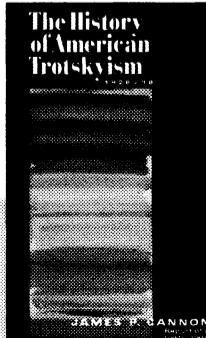
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Build support for GM strikers

The efforts by General Motors to force 9,200 striking members of the United Auto Workers in Flint, Michigan, back to work, including through the use of the federal courts, continue to raise the stakes in this confrontation between the auto giant and one of the biggest unions in the United States.

The owners of GM have invested major resources in their drive to cut 54,000 jobs — out of a workforce of 220,000 — and push down working conditions. Almost two months old, the Flint strikes have become the most costly labor battle in the auto industry since the 67-day GM strike in 1970. Why have the bosses taken such a hard-nosed position?

The auto giant is forced by the laws of the world capitalist market to try to slash jobs while maintaining production levels if they hope to become as efficient as the most productive industries. GM is driven by the fact that it makes barely half what its largest competitor, Ford, does per vehicle. Ford and Chrysler have been ahead of GM in “downsizing” their workforces and speeding up production in face of stiff competition from auto bosses in Germany, Japan, and elsewhere. “Now it’s GM’s time,” declared columnist John Farmer in the July 16 Newark *Star-Ledger*. “Wall Street has been blunt about what GM should do: Use the strike to begin a dramatic restructuring; take a hit now in the interest of future competitiveness.”

GM is determined to take on the auto workers in order to tear up previous work rules, gut safety and health protection, and weaken other union rights in the name of efficiency and modernization. To intimidate the union, the bosses seek to block unemployment compensation for laid-off UAW members and threaten to permanently shut down more plants. Now the auto giant is attempting to use the federal courts, either through an arbitrator’s ruling or a direct court order declaring the strike illegal, to force the unionists back to work — the first time it has done so since

the 1937 Flint sit-down strikes.

As we have seen many times, from the 1937 sit-down strikes to recent rail strikes, the courts are an instrument of the employers’ interests, almost always coming down on their side. Even the initial move to force union officials to agree to “expedited arbitration” is a threat to union power because it gives a so-called neutral individual the right to end the strike, taking it out of the hands of the union membership. The labor movement should oppose all attempts by the bosses to use the courts against the striking workers.

If the auto workers push back GM, working people everywhere will be strengthened in our struggle against employer attacks. If GM bosses defeat the UAW in the Flint strikes, the whole labor movement will be set back. The task at hand for labor is to explain the stakes in this fight and draw fellow unionists and other workers into solidarity with the UAW strikers.

Workers at GM’s Romulus facility in Michigan showed the way by protesting being forced to use replacements for auto parts usually made in Flint. The solidarity actions organized by the UAW in Flint on July 21 are another example of what is needed. If anything confirms the desire by broad numbers of working people to stand up to the bosses, it is the near-unanimous vote by 5,000 workers to authorize a strike against GM’s Saturn assembly plant. This is the plant that the big-business media had long held up as a model for “labor peace” until workers there decided there was no peace, only a one-sided war against them. Solidarity with the GM workers can be organized through plant-gate collections, delegations of unionists to the UAW picket lines, union meetings featuring strikers or others, and many other ways. Above all, working people can aid the GM strikers by telling the truth about this fight and by joining other labor struggles and skirmishes breaking out in cities everywhere.

Health care for miners a right

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled June 25 that a company that previously ran coal mines in West Virginia is no longer obligated to pay lifetime health insurance premiums for miners it employed, or for their survivors and families. Socialist Workers candidates Cecelia Moriarity for governor of Pennsylvania, and Dorothy Kolis for U.S. Congress, 14th C.D., issued the following statement.

The Socialist Workers Campaign denounces the recent Supreme Court ruling voiding the contractual and legal obligation of Eastern Enterprises to continue to provide health benefits for retired miners and their families. The court decision is a serious attack on the United Mine Workers (UMWA), and all of labor.

In 1978 the United Mine Workers union negotiated contracts guaranteeing lifetime health benefits for all retired miners, including those whose employers had gone out of business. In 1992 Congress enacted a law extending this agreement to companies like Eastern that had previously signed contracts with the UMWA before 1978.

The 5-4 ruling by the Supreme Court was posed in clear class terms. The court ruled the law violated the Fifth Amendment’s ban on “taking” private property for public use without paying just compensation. This ruling is part of the offensive of the employers to boost their sagging rate of profit at the expense of working people.

The ruling opens the door to hundreds of corporations — the so-called “reach back” companies no longer

involved in mining that supported Eastern’s suit — to use this decision to cut health benefits to retired miners. LTV, with an estimated \$145 million “liability,” is one of these bosses. Like other companies, LTV can use this ruling to get off the hook and not pay a dime toward miners’ health care.

We stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the struggle of coal miners for top-quality health benefits whether they are working, laid-off, or retired. Retired workers should not be tossed aside once they are no longer producing profits for the bosses. As we age, health care becomes more, not less important. With the continued attacks on Black Lung benefits and safe working conditions in the mines, the fight for health care takes on added importance.

The labor movement must take up the fight for free, quality health care for all. Workers’ health care should not be tied to the financial well being of their individual employers. Health care is a human right not a privilege of those who can afford to pay for it.

A fighting strategy to combat the austerity drive of the bosses against workers the world over is necessary. We can’t rely on politicians or employers to advance our interests. The only time workers have advanced is when we have organized to fight for our rights. Workers are fighting today from the strikes against General Motors in the U.S. to those in Puerto Rico protesting the privatization of the phone company. Linking up with these fights and others will be necessary as part of the fight against the coal bosses and their assault on miners’ health and safety.

Rightists face crisis in N. Ireland

Continued from Page 12

ange Order or say ‘We let one side have their way this year, so next year the march should go through?’” That’s what they did with the Ormeau Road this year and that’s no good.” For the last two years the triumphalist Orange march down the nationalist Lower Ormeau Road community in Belfast has been prevented. This year, the Parades Commission allowed the march to proceed July 13. The Lower Ormeau Concerned Community (LOCC) countermobilized with black flags and black balloons.

A local resident of Lower Ormeau Road, who didn’t want to be named, told the *Militant* that this plan had already been made at a community meeting the week before the Quinn murders. “The black flags were for the people killed by loyalists in this area in the last few decades,” he said. The LOCC campaigned against the Parade Commission decision on the Lower Ormeau Orange march and said the community would continue to oppose it. “This was a trade-off for Garvagh Road.” He described how the army and RUC sealed off the Lower Ormeau Road on the two evenings before the Orange march.

Local Sinn Fein councilor Sean Hayes said that during this RUC and army operation young residents were hit with batons as they tried to put up a banner for the protest

against the Orange march. Sinn Fein is the party leading the fight for a united Ireland.

Hayes added that the next focus for the disputed Orange parades will be the August 8 Apprentice Boys march in Derry. Unionist and loyalist officials first refused to join a forum for talks on community relations with nationalist residents of the Bogside area of Derry. They have since reversed this decision and will now take part.

The future of the Drumcree Orange march is now the focus of talks organized by the British government. These are proximity talks between the Orange Order and Garvagh Road residents organized through mediators. The residents’ representative, Breandan MacCionnaith, called for a civic forum and face-to-face discussion addressing a range of issues. The civic forum is recommended in the Good Friday Agreement. Meanwhile, a new inquiry began in Derry July 20 into the 1972 British army Bloody Sunday killing of 14 civil rights protesters. British prime minister Blair announced the inquiry after a decades-long campaign by relatives of the dead and injured.

Celia Pugh is a member of the Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union in London. Anne Howie is a member of the Transport and General Workers Union in Manchester.

Puerto Rico phone strike

Continued from front page

president of the Independent Brotherhood of Telephone Workers (HIETEL) and main spokesperson for the strikers, said the two unions had held membership meetings and approved the leadership’s proposal to go back to work under certain conditions: “that there be no sanctions against the unions and no sanctions against the union members.”

In addition, the strikers insisted on their right to discipline members of the union who crossed the picket lines, which company and government officials have challenged. “The company has no right to interfere in the unions’ internal affairs, including our decision to sanction strike-breakers,” remarked HIETEL member Abner Amy in a phone interview.

Union officials said they had decided to propose an end to the strike because the next stage of the struggle could drag out with months of negotiations in boardrooms and government offices.

“We will continue the fight against the sale of the telephone company, even after we go back to work,” Cruz said, noting that the transaction was not yet completed.

In a July 21 statement, Rosselló soft-pedaled his previously intransigent position that strikers would be sanctioned. “We will welcome with open arms all telephone workers who want to return to work in good faith,” he asserted. But skeptical workers note that the government also continues to insist it will “enforce all existing laws and rules and collective agreements,” which constitutes a threat to victimize workers who struck.

The HIETEL president reported that the telephone strikers and other unions were planning to hold a protest July 25 in the southern town of Guánica where the ruling pro-statehood party, the New Progressive Party, will stage a rally to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the U.S. invasion and occupation of the island. Pro-independence groups are also planning a rally in Guánica that day to mark 100 years of struggle against U.S. colonial rule.

Several thousand people rallied July 19 at the Cerro Maravilla mountaintop to mark the 20th anniversary of the entrapment and execution of two young pro-independence fighters by police at that site. The Cerro Maravilla murders, which led to revelations of systematic FBI and local government persecution of the pro-independence and labor movements, sparked a major government crisis that reverberates to this day.

The general strike remains a big topic of discussion among working people in Puerto Rico. It was the first one of this scope since the 1933-34 sugarcane workers strike. “The general strike was really a people’s strike, and it was a giant success,” remarked Miguel Sánchez, a member of UITICE, the electrical construction workers union, in a phone interview from San Juan. “It’s likely that Rosselló will go ahead with the sale of the telephone company, and the struggle will be uphill. But the general strike and the telephone strike surprised everyone, and it showed our power.”

The Broad Committee of Union Organizations (CAOS), which called the general strike, has decided to call another one in August to protest the government’s economic policies. The date has not yet been announced.

“If the government gets away with it, it will continue to sell off other public corporations. The next ones might be the electrical company and the workers accident compensation fund,” Sánchez noted. “We have to fight against that.”

Socialists campaign in N.Y.

MAURICE WILLIAMS

“We campaigned for two days in upstate New York where we collected 300 signatures and sold 80 copies of the *Militant* and one subscription,” said Mary Ann Schmidt and Nancy Rosenstock. The two activists were petitioning to get Socialist Workers Party candidates Al Duncan for governor, Ruth Robinett for lieutenant governor, and Rose Ana Berbeo for U.S. Senate on the ballot.

“We visited the plant gate of New Venture Gear in East Syracuse where members of the United Auto Workers snatched up 47 copies of the *Militant*,” said Schmidt. “UAW members at the Curtis Screw plant in Buffalo also bought nine papers.”

The socialist workers also campaigned at the Anheuser-Busch brewery in Baldwinsville, New York, where workers are going through contract negotiations. Frank Aldrich told the *Militant* that his main concerns about the contract were the elimination of past practice and a two-year review of workers’ attendance. He bought the *Militant* to find out more about the GM strike and said a “no” vote on the contract was needed now. Five workers bought copies of the *Militant*, and one purchased a subscription.

“We are aiming to collect 22,000 signatures by mid-August to get the candidates on the ballot,” said Rosenstock. “Anyone who would like to help should contact the campaign office at 718-230-8643.”

Chattanooga foundry workers push back bosses

This column is devoted to reporting the resistance by working people to the employers' assault on their living standards, working conditions, and unions.

The biggest issue concerning strikers was the company's demand for "flexibility" in work schedules, which would allow Wheland to schedule 10- and 12-hour shifts with

ON THE PICKET LINE

We invite you to contribute short items to this column as a way for other fighting workers around the world to read about and learn from these important struggles. Jot down a few lines about what is happening in your union, at your workplace, or other workplaces in your area, including interesting political discussions.

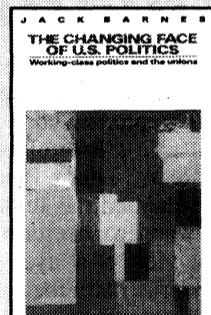
CHATTANOOGA, Tennessee — Steelworkers at Wheland Foundry's two plants here ended a seven-week strike June 19, after ratifying a three-year contract.

Members of United Steelworkers of America (USWA) Local 3967 went on strike May 2 as their old contract expired.

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227 used the argument that bilingual education is an effective way to teach English. We don't think this is a valid criticism. Bilingual education is an effective way to teach English — as well as being the most effective method of teaching academic subjects.

Most parents, especially those who don't speak English fluently, also want their children to learn English. These parents recognize how lack of fluency in the dominant language has cut them off from the positions available to those who speak English. They don't want this to happen to their children. Their children will become a part of the U.S. workforce, in a society where job skills are becoming incredibly competitive. These parents feel that one of the job skills their children will need is the ability to not only speak conversational English, but to be able to understand the technical language workers now need. They don't want their children to have no choice but to work in the fields.

In the course of the fight against Proposition 227, many bilingual teachers were mobilized, as were many parents and many students from the university level on down. In the Central Valley, people were

not demoralized by the defeat. They are looking for ways to continue the fight. We do not think they will sit still while a whole school generation is deprived of literacy in English and in Spanish.

The fight for bilingual education is central to the defense of public education. Many people don't realize that the ruling class's attack on bilingual education is merely one facet of their attack on public education for working people.

We expect that the *Militant* will offer valid and useful ideas to help in the fight for bilingual education. We do think that more thought must go into this. For example, reporting that funds for bilingual education were cut off is misleading. Proposition 227 outlaws the use of the children's native language in school and imposes penalties on teachers who use the child's native language to help them. This is much more devastating than merely cutting off funds.

We look forward to seeing more articles in the *Militant* about how to fight to restore bilingual education.

Catarino Garza
and Vangie Eidsvik-Garza
Modesto, California

New York: construction workers hold daily pickets for union jobs



Militant/Hilda Cuzco

Daily picketing continues by members of the construction trades union at the site for the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA), which is employing nonunion labor. The site is at 59th Street and 9th Avenue in New York City. Laborers, plumbers, steamfitters, and other rank-and-file members participate in the 6:00-8:00 a.m. protests at the barricaded gate of the site. "This is union busting," said Joe Smith, 25-year-old mixing truck driver. Cars and trucks honk in solidarity as they go by. The Laborers union brought the rat, which represents MTA bosses.

TWA pilots picket airline in St. Louis

ST. LOUIS — On July 2 members of the Airline Pilots Association International (APLA) who work for TWA picketed in front of the airline's ticket counter here. St. Louis is TWA's domestic hub, with some 375 departures every day.

TWA refuses to discuss wage increases for the airline pilots. An ALPA flyer distributed at the July 2 picket line explains that TWA pilots have given up over \$600 million in concessions in recent years and taken pay cuts of more than 50 percent.

Since the end of June TWA pilots have organized seven informational picket lines at the airline's corporate offices in downtown St. Louis and at the airport. Many pilots are refusing to fly overtime hours beyond the 70 hours per month required. This has led to as many as 30-40 flights being canceled a day.

The contract of the mechanics ramp workers and cleaners organized by the International Association of Machinists also expired in September of 1997. They say they make 60 percent of what is earned by workers at other airlines.

The 4,200 flight attendants at TWA, also members of the IAM, threatened to stop flying on Boeing 757's by July 1 unless the crews on these planes were increased. The union said that it was unsafe to fly with the smaller crews. On June 13, an agreement was reached that requires TWA to pay a \$10 per hour "understaffing penalty" in addition to the regular hourly pay for crews flying on the 757s.

Susan LaMont, a member of USWA Local 2122 in Fairfield, Alabama; Alyson Kennedy, a member of the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers Union in Chicago; and Ray Parsons, a member of USWA Local 310 in Des Moines, Iowa, contributed to this column.

LETTERS

Bilingual education debate

We have both worked either as bilingual teachers (Spanish) or as teachers of English as a Second Language. Between us, we have about twenty-five years' teaching experience in various parts of the United States — from the South Bronx to California's Central Valley.

All the programs we have seen are different. The underlying theme of the programs we have observed or worked in use the student's native language to teach core subjects while the student learns English. The hope is that the students do not fall behind academically while learning English.

There are other benefits which defenders of minority or national rights can see in bilingual education-preservation and appreciation of the students' native language and culture, ability to communicate with elders in the community, etc. Needless to say, most programs funded by federal or state money ignore those issues. The state focuses on the ability of the student to learn the dominant language.

One of the criticisms in the *Militant* article on Proposition 227 was that the movement in opposition to

not demoralized by the defeat. They are looking for ways to continue the fight. We do not think they will sit still while a whole school generation is deprived of literacy in English and in Spanish.

The fight for bilingual education is central to the defense of public education. Many people don't realize that the ruling class's attack on bilingual education is merely one facet of their attack on public education for working people.

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We look forward to seeing more articles in the *Militant* about how to fight to restore bilingual education.

Catarino Garza
and Vangie Eidsvik-Garza
Modesto, California

Labor's victory here is a wrench in the spokes of this anti-union crusade.

The AFL-CIO effort had an openly reactionary taint, too. The article "California antilabor referendum fails" (*Militant*, June 15) states that the officialdom "rarely mentioned" that part of 226 outlawing "campaign contributions from so-called 'foreign nationals,' including immigrant workers." On the contrary, the labor skates routinely comment on this point, as their campaign stated such a ban wasn't necessary because such "foreign" contributions were already legally barred, a restriction they support.

Literature, ads, and talks assailed an architect of the 226 initiative for being a "registered foreign lobbyist."

*Jon Hillson
Los Angeles, California*

The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of general interest to our readers. Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.

Striking paperworkers in Canada stand up to company intimidation

BY MICHEL DUGRÉ

TROIS-RIVIÈRES, Quebec — On July 13, paperworkers at the Wayagamak plant of Abitibi-Consolidated in this small town in the heart of Quebec defeated a second attempt by the company to break the unity among close to 5,000 members of the Communication, Energy and Paperworkers Union (CEP) in Ontario, Quebec, and Newfoundland, who have been on strike since June 15.

Workers at the Wayagamak plant in Trois-Rivières, Quebec, decided to continue being part of the strike, despite threats by the company to close down their plant because of lost contracts since the beginning of the strike. Threats to close down the plant, supported by an intense campaign by local media and the Trois-Rivières mayor, got different responses by workers at the Wayagamak plant.

At a press conference announcing a meeting where the question of continuing the strike would be discussed, strikers were seen shouting, "We want to go back to work."

The majority of workers, however, had a different view. "I've been working here for more than 30 years, and I can tell you that each time we had negotiations or a strike the company threatened to close down the plant, and each time we signed a new contract the company announced new investments to improve its capacity," said one worker at the Wayagamak plant who didn't want to be identified. "Nothing of what we have today was given to us. We had to fight for it," he added.

"My two brothers-in-law work at the General Motors plant near Montreal, and they too are being threatened by a plant shutdown," said Pierre Ricard from Shawinigan. "But we shouldn't give in under such threats."

Similar threats have also been made against the Abitibi plant in Chandler, Quebec. But it took only a few hours for workers there to push back this attempt and decide to continue their strike.

Early in the strike the company challenged the way the strike votes had been taken by workers in its four Ontario plants. Workers responded by rapidly taking new strike votes that got the support of more than 95 percent of workers.

A similar attempt to use the courts to end the strike at two other plants in Newfoundland is still pending.

The contract signed with Abitibi is expected to serve as a pattern for 20,000 other paperworkers in eastern Canada. They are following the strike very closely. Members of 25 CEP locals in Quebec have decided, for example, to give two hours of pay per week to help workers on strike.

No negotiations have taken place so far with Abitibi on the content of a new contract. The strike is essentially around the refusal by workers to negotiate plant by plant as the company wishes.

Abitibi-Consolidated is the world's largest newsprint producer and its biggest paper exporter. The strike affects close to half its total production.

Abitibi tries to take advantage of a relatively depressed worldwide paper market to break the union and inflict a blow on workers that would allow the company to become more competitive in this industry marked by overcapacity.

The price of pulp, a benchmark product used to make tissue and paper, is about US\$550 a ton, or half what it cost in 1995. Another example is the price of offset photocopying paper, which is currently at around US\$725 a short ton compared with as much as \$1,000 two years ago.

The paper industry is going through a process of restructuring as companies around the world are combining to boost their profits.

Abitibi itself is the result of a merger last year between Abitibi-Price and Stone-Consolidated.

solidated. In early June of this year, Stora Kopparbergs Bergslags AB and Enso Oyj, the second-largest forest products companies in Sweden and Finland respectively agreed to merge, creating the world's biggest paper maker.

While the economic crisis in Asia is reducing world paper demand, giant paper companies are eyeing Asian companies as easy targets for their drive to expand their production. Abitibi-Consolidated signed an agreement early July with the Norwegian paper giant Norske to invest in Hansol Paper of south Korea and establish a joint venture with production capacity representing 18 percent of Asia's market, including Japan. In March Norske bought a 70 percent stake in Shinho Paper of Thailand, and in mid-May bought Shinho's south Korean newsprint plant for \$175 million.

This deep competition for markets and profits drives paper companies to attack workers' income and working conditions. But workers at the Wayagamak plant in Trois-Rivières, as well as thousands of other CEP members across Eastern Canada, have decided to fight to defend their union and working conditions.

Michel Dugré is member of the Union of Needletraders, Industrial and Textile Employees and the Communist League candidate for mayor of Montreal.

Russian workers demand pay



Military industry workers in Russia held a protest July 8 at the Bolshoi Theater near the Kremlin, demanding payment of back wages. Some of them have not been paid in months. Poster at top left reads: "President, Resign!" referring to Russian president Boris Yeltsin.

Australia dockers debate settlement

BY LINDA HARRIS

SYDNEY, Australia — Dock workers employed by Patrick Stevedores here voted on June 24, after a five-hour meeting, to accept an agreement that includes massive job losses and significant changes to working conditions. The previous day wharfies in Melbourne accepted the deal following a five-hour heated debate, with some 30 percent voting against it. These two meetings constituted the majority of Patrick workers around Australia.

The settlement was negotiated between officials of the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA), the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU), and Patrick. It came after the victory won by the union on the picket lines after Patrick had sacked its entire workforce on April 7 and replaced them with scab labor. The month-long battle, which won broad support from workers and others, forced the company and the government to back down from their union-busting course. Patrick workers marched back through the gates on May 7.

Terms of settlement

Under the new agreement, 626 of 1,315 permanent jobs will be lost through voluntary redundancies. Of these, 160 MUA maintenance workers will be taken back as contract workers on a three-year contract and 40 security, cleaning, and linemarking jobs will be contracted out. Gang sizes have been reduced from 10 to 6 and the company will now control rosters and job allocations. Overtime will be cut, while "incentive bonuses payments" will be made for increased crane lift rates.

All 25 wharfies who had been blacklisted at the return to work have now won their jobs back. And as part of the deal Patrick was forced to resume operations in all ports, including those such as Newcastle, which it had threatened to abandon.

"A lot of people don't like it," Peter Francis, a member of the MUA site committee at Port Botany, said in an interview with the *Militant*, "but at the end of the day everyone realized that there was no choice in the matter and they voted for it." He said that there won't be a problem filling the redundancies. "There are a lot of older blokes at Port Botany who are happy to go." He said many of them couldn't keep up with

the increased pace and wouldn't want to work under the new conditions.

Dimitris Arvantis, a maintenance worker for 14 years at Patrick's Port Botany terminal, told the *Militant*, "This agreement will turn the terminals into a death trap with the cuts in gangs." He said that it was not good for the young workers or the future generation. "Everyone is crook [sick] about it, because we had so big a fight." Arvantis didn't vote at the meeting; he said they were told they faced the threat of being outside the gate for the next 14 months if they voted the agreement down.

One of the results of the agreement is to increase the weight of casualization on the waterfront. Beside the outsourcing of work to contractors, lashing of vessels will now be done by casual workers and they will now be offered work before overtime is offered to permanent workers. There are currently 600 casual MUA members employed by Patrick. During the fight on the picket lines workers expressed expectations of winning more permanent jobs.

It is unclear what will happen to injured workers under the new agreement. In the past, they were rehabilitated on light duties, for example, cleaning. Now cleaning jobs will be contracted out. MUA members who are cleaners will be offered interviews with the contractor, but many of them have some form of injury and the company will not have to hire them.

I don't see how it can be safe'

Joe Serena, a straddle carrier driver at Patrick's East Swanson Dock, was among a third of the workers in Melbourne who voted against the deal. "Personally, I wasn't happy with it, but you have to go with the times," he said. With staffing levels cut, he thinks that the productivity targets are barely possible. "I just don't see how it can be safe," he said. Serena used to drive in two stints — three hours and two-and-a-half hours — and also work lashing containers on the ships. Now he will drive for seven hours with only a 45-minute break. "Four o'clock in the morning, that's when you hit a brick wall," he said. "This extra time in the straddle will make it tougher."

The company can now demand that they work four hours overtime after the normal eight-hour shift. "Especially after the mid-

night shift you don't want to work another four hours. This is an occupational health and safety issue," Francis commented.

Both Patrick chairman Christopher Corrigan and Minister for Workplace Relations Peter Reith have claimed the settlement is a victory for "waterfront reform." However, reflecting the view of a layer of big business, the Melbourne daily the *Age* editorialized, "The government and its ally, Patrick, have failed to achieve their fundamental goal, the inauguration of a new era on the waterfront through the destruction of the union's monopoly."

An editorial in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, while claiming that the outcome vindicated both Patrick and the government for taking on the MUA, warned "there is a danger that the union will fight to claw back some of the ground it has given [as they did in] the early 1990s."

Greg Combet, ACTU assistant secretary, said that the redundancies were not as significant as those in the 1990s and could have been agreed without the events of the past months if the company had been prepared to negotiate. In 1992 the union negotiated government-funded redundancies with the then-Labor government that cut the workforce on the waterfront by more than half.

As part of the new deal, Patrick has agreed to pay the MUA's legal bills and the MUA said it would drop its conspiracy case against Corrigan and Reith. The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), however, has refused to drop legal action it has taken against the MUA over secondary boycotts during the dispute. MUA national secretary John Coombs said that dropping the ACCC case was a condition of the agreement.

On June 16 Producer & Consumer Stevedores (PCS), the scab labor outfit set up by the National Farmers Federation, was forced to sack most of its 353 employees, who had worked during the MUA lockout. PCS admitted it had been squeezed out of stevedoring by the settlement between the MUA and Patrick.

P&O, the other main stevedoring company, is looking to cut up to 550 jobs from their workforce of 1,200.

Linda Harris is a member of the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union.